

COLLEGE ENGLISH

VOLUME 13

The Root of the Evil: Teacher Certification

Donald R. Tuttle
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Foster B. Gresham

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For Contributors

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Editorial Procedure. Speed and care will obtain in handling manuscripts. Any delay is a matter of academic holidays, concentration of manuscripts in one adviser's field, or difficult decision.

For Readers

DONALD R. TUTTLE, who instigated the symposium on Teacher Certification, is a professor at Fenn who can point to successful experience in raising the standards in his state. His degrees are from Oberlin and Western Reserve, and his teaching has been on the school, junior college, and college levels. **JOHN McKIER-NAN**, professor and chairman at Geneseo (N.Y.) S.U.T.C., has also taught on several planes. His academic work was done at St. Joseph's, New Hampshire, and Penn State. **FOSTER B. GRESHAM** arrived as assistant professor at Longwood via Randolph-Macon, Virginia, and Princeton, and teaching in public and private secondary schools. **EUGENE E. SLAUGHTER** is a professor at Southeastern Oklahoma State. **JOHN R. SEARLES**, with all his degrees from Wisconsin, is associate professor of Education and English at that university. **KENNETH A. OLIVER**, professor and chairman at Occidental, also has his M.A. and Ph.D. from Wisconsin, and has taught both high-school

and college classes; he has published articles on comparative literature and "scattered poems." **ARTHUR L. SCOTT**, coming to the defense of Hemingway's Robert Cohn, is an assistant professor at Illinois. With a Ph.D. from Michigan, he is the editor of *Mark Twain: Selected Criticism* (1955) and about a dozen articles. **ROBERT C. HART** ("Hemingway on Writing") has degrees from Western Reserve and Northwestern, and is an assistant professor at Minnesota (Duluth Branch). **C. E. SCHORER**, currently an intern in the Detroit Receiving Hospital, has a Ph.D. from Chicago and an M.D. from Wisconsin. He taught in colleges and published articles on American literature before he entered medicine. **VERN WAGNER's** open letter to Mr. Hemingway comes from Wayne, where he is an assistant professor. With major degrees from Washington, he has published in *NEQ*, *JHI*, *WHR*, and *CE*—the last being the indictment of certain teacher certification groups, in the March 1956 issue.

More for Readers

College English is one of the four magazines published by The National Council of Teachers of English. The NCTE, founded in 1911, is the only organization devoted to English teaching from the first to the last grade, and it has about 35,000 members. In 1912 the Council began publishing *The English Journal*, which started putting out a college edition in 1928, splitting into *EJ* and *CE* ten years later. *EJ*, addressed to teachers in secondary schools, is edited by Professor Dwight Burton, Florida State University (Tallahassee), and *Elementary English* comes from Professor John DeBoer at the University of Illinois (Champaign). A subscription

to one of these magazines is \$4.00; this includes membership in the Council, with its privileges of certain book and record discounts. Closely allied to *CE* is *CCC*, the bulletin of the NCTE subsidiary, The Conference on College Composition and Communication. This unit, founded in 1949, has over a thousand members, who meet every spring and during the NCTE Thanksgiving convention. *CCC* is published quarterly, and subscriptions are \$2.00. Writers of articles and notes in this field should consider sending them to the editor, Professor Francis E. Bowman, Duke University (Durham, N.C.).

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COLLEGE ENGLISH

Volume 18

MARCH 1957

Number 6

The Preparation and Certification of Teachers of English: A Symposium

THE RATIONALE

Dear Editor:

I was much encouraged by our brief conversation in St. Louis in which you suggested that *College English* would be open to a few articles on the problem of improving the preparation of teachers of English in secondary schools. The subject has its dreary aspects, but it is tremendously important, and when seen in broad perspective it can become exciting. As far as I know, *College English* is the only magazine for our profession open to this kind of material, and it reaches exactly the right audience. The college teachers who are likely to be stimulated to take positive action to improve the present incredible conditions are those in the NCTE. Incredible? Brice Harris, First Vice-President of the Council, has just turned up a teacher of English in Pennsylvania with eighteen hours in English, every hour a "D."

Secondly, I believe the time is ripe for improvement. Recently I gave a speech on the certification problem in Michigan. *The Chicago Tribune* somehow got hold of a copy and ran an editorial on it taking up the better part of a column. I would not have known about it, but two Chicago businessmen took the trouble to write to me in approval, one sending me two copies of the editorial. The head of the Account-

ing Department at my college has just handed me an article on the need for improvement in English, written by the head of a large accounting firm. In January (according to *The N. Y. Times*) Dean Warren of the Columbia Law School pointed to the "epidemic proportions" of the inability of college graduates to use English. The public is ready to back us. So are some of the Education professors.

I am proposing, therefore, the publication of a symposium on teacher education and certification based on some of the speeches given at the St. Louis convention. Notes:

(1) John McKiernan's remarks on the desirability of nation-wide certification standards interested the St. Louis papers enough to make it the lead story of its reporting of the second day of the convention.

(2) Foster B. Gresham proposes to use such organizations as the regional accrediting associations to bring about improvements in teacher certification. I believe that this idea will work better than McKiernan's in the South.

(3) Eugene E. Slaughter's paper, "Organizing State-Wide Efforts for the Improvement of Certification Standards," follows. What he and his colleagues did is astounding: they brought about a sub-

stantial improvement in certification requirements primarily by working through the educationists' own organizations.

(4) On another program, I heard a very sensible paper by John R. Searles "The Professional Education of the Teacher of English." In it he appraises realistically how much of what kind of courses and practical experiences the beginning teacher of English needs. He shoots holes in the idea that thirty hours are needed in courses in Education, which is the actual practice in some places.

Taken together, these papers provide a remarkable overview of the problem and provide suggestions as to how we could work to solve it. I can safely say that there is nothing to duplicate it in the literature of the subject. All of the papers are short, all of them are written by men who have been very successful in leading to improvement in their states, or who are

now actually engaged in bringing improvement about.

What a joy it would be to know that every boy or girl in the country had well-prepared teachers of English and of the other academic subjects! But in Ohio in 1951, the median preparation of teachers of English was only twenty-one semester hours, whereas medians in physical education, art, home economics, and music were forty, forty-one, forty-two, and sixty semester hours respectively. Freshman English is included in the above figure, and in meeting the requirement, an hour of "D" was as good as an "A."

Sincerely yours,

DONALD R. TUTTLE, CHAIRMAN,
NCTE COMMITTEE ON PREPARATION AND CERTIFICATION

FENN COLLEGE

THE PROFESSION'S REACH: NATIONAL STANDARDS

JOHN MCKIERNAN

(Digest of remarks made at the 1956 Convention)

When one surveys the forty-eight states, he finds relatively few strong English associations, the presence of which might indicate either virility or reach. When one examines the lobbyists in education—those who are courting special understanding from the public—he finds no English group to compete in vehemence with, say, the mathematics teachers—this despite the fact that publicity is supposed to be a part of our own domain. When one inquires into the minimum essentials for admission to this profession, he finds himself in another dimension entirely—a world, in fact, of shadows, where no one reaches for anything.

Here is a nation where the teaching of language—man's greatest achievement, the infinite and complex key to his mastery of the environment—is entrusted, all too commonly, to chance

passers-by; and all too seldom confided to those who, by devotion and study, have proved their vestal fitness. One sees the common practice by school officials of hiring not English teachers, but teachers of science, home economics, or anything else and adding "an English class" to their load. One sees young American citizens penalized by their confinement to an educational slum area—the *status quo* wherein, through the geographical chance of birth in one state rather than another, a student may be instructed in one place by a teacher with *one-fifth* the preparation required of an English teacher in another area.

No one questions the need for national standards of legal tender, of weights and measures, or of pure foods and drugs. How, then, can the nation accept counterfeits, shortages, or adulterations in Eng-

lish education? Are we not, to put it crudely, engaged in shaping products for inter-state commerce? Must we not, then,

give our product an English substance and finish that will fully qualify it in any area of the Union?

THE POSSIBILITY OF REGIONAL COOPERATION

FOSTER B. GRESHAM

The fact that during the first half of this century there came into existence over one hundred agencies for accrediting institutions or departments of institutions of higher learning is evidence of a serious effort to improve professional standards. The fact, however, that we have had conflicts between agencies, duplication of work, and failure to establish consistently satisfactory academic standards for certification of teachers is an indication of the need of further study. The fact that certification requirements in the field of English still vary widely from state to state emphasizes the urgency of joint action on the part of the National Council of Teachers of English and other national English organizations to formulate desirable standards as a guide for all pertinent accrediting agencies, teacher-training institutions, and certifying authorities.

In seeking the adoption of such requirements, the local English councils and state associations have three means of action: working individually within a state, cooperating through regional committees, and investing authority in a single national committee to act on their behalf. All three of these methods of attack upon the problem are desirable, but the approach through regional committees has certain advantages which the other methods lack.

On the local level, councils or associations may make studies, pass resolutions, and delegate committees to hold conferences with state officials. As a result a committee may or may not be told that its interest in certification is appreciated, that the question of certification is a very complex one, and that the suggestions

made will receive consideration when the time comes to change requirements. The committee reports back to its organization and feels powerless to proceed further in effecting any immediate change in the state department's policy. The state superintendent or chief certifying officer hears as many voices as there are professional and lay groups within his state and is deafened by the multiplicity of demands. The groups within his state, he may feel, are pressure groups and he must resist pressure. Studies which reveal needs of change, unless sponsored by a state department, may be considered as attacks upon the efficiency of the department and thus project the latter into a defensive fight to justify the *status quo*. Though some state English groups have been very successful in influencing state policies, others have found that the initiation of an effort to reform or improve state policies and standards has been a discouraging enterprise.

A national committee for promoting the improvement of standards, as essential as it is, also has its encumbrances. Those of whom it is composed may not represent the prevailing thinking in the widely separated areas from which they come. Because funds are unavailable for travel expenses, national committee meetings for discussion are necessarily rare, and correspondence is a poor substitute. The few who make up the committee are faced with the challenge of many immediate goals and long-range objectives which cannot be handled adequately by so few.

Between the local and the national levels, in a position to exert strong in-

fluence and to strengthen the hands of both local and national committees, should be the regional committee. Staffed basically by Council members from states that now comprise the regional accrediting association areas, or smaller areas, regional committees could do an effective job of promoting the improvement of certification standards. The trend of cooperative action today is regional. Aside from the fact that our chief accrediting agencies are the regional associations, professional organizations and state boards are utilizing regional conferences as a means of exchanging ideas, initiating studies, and accomplishing results. Through regional cooperation, state certifying officers have made an advance in solving common problems and have developed reciprocity compacts in three areas. It was by regional committee conferences and studies that administrators conducted their effective Cooperative Program in Educational Administration, beginning in 1950, for the improvement of preparation and certification standards in the administrative field. National organizations have found regional conferences a rewarding means of strengthening the national body. State English councils and associations should follow this trend by creating regional committees to present by united action the case of the English teaching profession.

We must look to the regional accrediting associations (which are the institution-wide accrediting agencies) and to the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (which has been instructed by the National Commission on Accrediting to establish close cooperation with the regional associations) for help in solving problems relating to certification in English. So must the state certifying authorities, but in solving these problems satisfactorily, both the accrediting associations and the certifying authorities need professional advice, for in the absence of such advice they may make decisions objectionable to members of

the subject-matter professions. Sitting on the sidelines criticizing and condemning legal authorities and educationists may provide a self-satisfying pastime as an outlet to the emotions, but it will not achieve results. There is a need of more vigorous cooperative action on the part of all English groups to achieve a position of influence in determining policies relating to English. The English teaching profession can gain this position by demonstrating a willingness to participate in the complex task of determining adequate teacher-training programs and certification standards. This willingness is not to be interpreted as a willingness to serve on committees if called upon but a willingness to have concrete proposals ready for consideration and adoption and to have committees known to accrediting associations and certifying authorities ready for serving in advisory capacities.

To be recognized and listened to, this regional committee should also make studies of the current programs of teacher training in English within the region, of the certification procedures of the states within the region, and of the possibilities of cooperative action with other academic subject professions within the region. It should determine desirable certification standards in English or endorse adopted national standards. It should assist the national committee in the collection of materials for loan to state and regional committees working on problems of certification. It should plan a program of public relations—to make known its serious concern to such agencies as the regional accrediting associations, the State Boards of Education, advisory committees, chief certifying officers or boards, state education associations, and so forth.

To be recognized and listened to, the regional committee must also represent the whole English profession of the area rather than a single segment. Regional committees should have in their membership not only members of NCTE, but

representatives of the College English Association, Modern Language Association, and other English organizations within the region. Its membership should include college and university professors of English and teachers of English in the public schools. Only with such membership composition will the deliberations, decisions, and recommendations of the committee be regarded in any way as representative of the thinking of the English profession.

Up to the present the efforts on the part of the English profession to participate in the task of improving teacher preparation and certification standards have been sporadic and scattered, lacking the concerted attack upon the problem which was made earlier in the century by such professions as medicine, law, and professional education. On the local level there have been vigorous efforts by small

groups such as a state council of English, a state CEA, or a volunteer committee of college English professors; and on the national level there has been the work of the NCTE's Committee on the Preparation and Certification of Teachers of English in Secondary Schools, still in its infancy. Work on the regional level should now become a vital part of the picture. The grassroots movement which has begun within the states should spread into the surrounding areas. Any local English council or association could initiate regional cooperation by inviting representatives from other English organizations in its area to a planning meeting. Because of the growing professional concern on the state level the time seems ripe for coordinating the increased state efforts for more effective regional action that could result in a sound, nationally unified front.

ORGANIZING STATE-WIDE EFFORTS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS: THE OKLAHOMA STORY

EUGENE E. SLAUGHTER

The Oklahoma story concerns principally the State Department of Education, the Oklahoma Education Association, and their joint agency the Oklahoma Commission on Teacher Education and Certification. But I shall spend most of my time telling about the Oklahoma Council of Teachers of English.

The Oklahoma Commission on Teacher Education and Certification was established in 1947. It consists of twenty-five teachers and school administrators, and its advisory council has seventy-odd more. Many teachers and parents, many institutions and agencies have been involved in the work of the Commission. Although its relation to the State Board of Education is only advisory, the Commission has seen the Board accept its recommendations consistently. Subject to minimums set by the Commission, each teacher-

training institution works out its own programs, which are periodically evaluated by a committee appointed by the Commission. The first round of evaluations was completed in 1953, although some provisionally approved programs were revisited. In 1956 the second round of appraisals began, and they will be spaced through the next four years.

So much for the background. What about the language-arts teachers since 1947? As individuals, they have served on committees and on the advisory council, and a few have been members of the Commission. But their organization has been the Oklahoma Council of Teachers of English, which meets at both district and state level as the English section of the Oklahoma Education Association. This Council has committees on audio-visual aids, curriculum articulation, publi-

cations, professional standards, radio, and scholarships. All these committees have played a part in professional improvement. But I shall limit my story to the Professional Standards Committee.

In October 1949, a few months after it was established, this Committee recommended a statement of principles which was approved by the English Council and published in the *Oklahoma Teacher* for December of that year. In November, before publication, the chairman of the Committee sent a copy of the principles to the Executive Secretary of the Oklahoma Commission, who replied offering his support.

According to the approved statement, teachers of English should set their own professional standards; their large plan was to bring about continuous professional improvement among the English teachers in Oklahoma by careful selection of apprentice teachers, by competent education and training, by strict certification, by safeguarding personal and academic freedom, and by clear determination of the English teacher's responsibilities.

The Professional Standards Committee decided to try influencing opinion by means of published studies. Since the Department of Education was changing certification plans, the first study aimed to provide a guide as to what college preparation an English teacher should have for a standard certificate. The project was begun in December 1949 and completed in April 1950. A summary of the findings was published in the April *Intelligencer* for members of the English Council, and the complete report was published, in two installments, in the *Oklahoma Teacher* for May and September 1950. While the study was underway, the chairman of the Committee invited the co-operation of the Oklahoma Commission and the Department of Education. The Executive Secretary of the Commission and several members of the State Department, including the Superintendent of Public Instruction, expressed interest

and offered use of the Department's records, but were unable to furnish clerical assistance to compile information on English teachers' preparation and teaching assignments. They acknowledged the published study with congratulations.

The study was in two parts. The first part summarized the requirements of forty-six states concerning minimum college preparation for a standard certificate to teach English in high school. The second part presented the opinions of seventy-three Oklahoma English teachers concerning preparation needed to teach high-school English. The findings showed that the proposed Oklahoma requirements were in reasonable agreement with the other states and teacher opinion.

For the next three years the Professional Standards Committee limited itself to action within the English Council. Then, in December 1953 it projected an inquiry into how many teachers of English had only a minimum college preparation and, while discussing the project with members of the State Department of Education, accepted an offer to co-operate in a study of English teachers who drop out of teaching. The Department supplied records of preparation and distributed and collected questionnaires. The Committee compiled data, drafted questions, summarized findings. These two studies were completed in October 1955 and published in the *Oklahoma Teacher* for December the same year. The first study revealed that one-fifth of all English teachers had only a minor teaching field in language arts—that is, a minimum of sixteen semester hours in college English, speech, and journalism, with at least six semester hours in the subject taught. The second study revealed that in 1954 one-fifth of the English teachers stopped teaching English, and half of these—or one-tenth of all English teachers—stopped teaching anything. The number of English teachers newly employed was almost equal to the number of English teachers who discontinued teaching altogether; evidence there-

fore suggested that about one-tenth of the English teachers were replaced annually by teachers who shifted to English from other subjects and the elementary grades. In its published report, the Committee concluded that conditions in Oklahoma did not justify the one-fifth of the language-arts teachers having only a minor teaching field, and that too many teachers shifted from English to other subjects and elementary grades.

The latest study of the Professional Standards Committee, conducted this year and now awaiting publication, concerned the role of the English teacher in junior and senior high school. Part of the large plan originally adopted by the English Council, this study also fell in with a suggestion of a member of the State Department of Education, and it served to involve school administrators and teachers of English by means of a questionnaire. The study revealed that the role of the English teacher has lost definition and become confused, although the goals for language and literature are generally accepted. Administrators and English teachers are at variance on how to ensure the best growth and development of the students. Two questions define the differences. One is whether or not language is to be considered as a tool used and taught in all subjects equally, or although it is used and partially taught in all subjects, whether or not it constitutes a discipline for which a specialist—the English teacher—should bear a special and unique responsibility. The other question is whether or not every piece and kind of writing is literature and is to be used

and taught in all subject areas equally, or whether or not some pieces are literature in a special sense, require a special treatment, and constitute a special and unique responsibility that is placed on the English teacher. A majority of administrators and a considerable minority of English teachers declared themselves in favor of treating language and literature with little differentiation and of spreading out the responsibility for teaching them. But a majority of English teachers and a sizable minority of administrators indicated their belief in the English teacher's unique responsibility in respect to language and literature. And the same division between administrators and English teachers appeared in regard to the English teacher's responsibility to attain the goals set for other curricular areas, such as the social sciences, the natural sciences, and the vocational subjects.

The foregoing is merely a sketch of the Oklahoma story concerning efforts to improve professional standards. The principal action has been that of the Oklahoma Commission on Teacher Education and Certification. But the Oklahoma Council of Teachers of English has taken part, both by sharing in the work of the Commission and by conducting independent studies as guides and controls. The efforts of all agencies are needed. Although some conditions have improved, there is much to do. The needs are still to select, train, certificate; to safeguard freedom; to define the role of the language arts teacher. And the improvement ought to be continuous. This must be a story without an ending.

THE PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION OF THE TEACHER OF ENGLISH

JOHN R. SEARLES

Throughout the United States, state requirements in professional education courses range from eleven to twenty-four credits, with sixteen to eighteen credits

most common. These are the minimum requirements. Undoubtedly some teacher-preparatory colleges require much more than the minimum. In Wisconsin, for

example, where the legal requirement is 18 credits, at least one college demands more than thirty; roughly one-fourth of the credits required for graduation are in education courses.

In the distribution of these courses there is also great variation. Commonly there are requirements in the areas of educational psychology, including guidance and mental health; the history and philosophy of education; curriculum, general methods, and orientation to teaching; and special methods and practice teaching. Courses in tests and measurements, professional organization and ethics, teaching materials and audio-visual instruction, record maintenance, administration and supervision, and others, may be elected or required in some States. As was once said in a different connection, "Here is God's plenty."

In the face of this considerable variation in number and kind of education courses required for certification, we are confronted with the question of how many courses, and what kind, are really needed for the preparation of a teacher. Should eleven credits be the minimum or twenty-four? What courses are of primary importance? Following the golden mean, or perhaps the dead average, we might try to sketch a rough composite picture of the situation in States which demand sixteen to eighteen credits in education. The picture would look something like this: three to six credits of educational psychology, three credits of history or philosophy, two to four credits in the theory of teaching major or minor subjects, and four to six credits in practice teaching. Again, remember that these are minimum requirements. Then too, the fact that they are common requirements need not mean that they constitute an ideal pattern for the professional education of prospective teachers.

To try to determine absolutely an ideal set of requirements would be rash indeed. No matter what the recommendation, it would fly in the face of the wisdom of

many of the 48 States. Perhaps we can avoid final pronouncements and arrive at some tentative conclusions if we turn the problem other-end-to. Instead of asking what is now being done to meet the needs of beginning teachers, or whether our present practices do or do not measure up to an ideal, we might begin with the needs of our students. What are some of the questions they do ask, and should ask, about their future profession? Let's start with the most general ones. In this category come many like the following: "What is my role as a teacher? How can I learn to act like one? How can I learn to fit into the school and the community? get along with fellow-teachers, students, parents, administrators? What is my particular job as a teacher of English, and how does it fit into the purposes of the school as a whole? In short, what am I trying to do?"

I think it is clear that no complete answers to such questions will be forthcoming from education courses or any other courses, for that matter. The answers will depend on the personality and intelligence of the teacher, on qualities like tolerance, emotional maturity, enthusiasm, patience, and good humor which are not developed by courses alone. The role of the individual teacher will become clear only with experience. He must find his place, work out his own salvation. None the less, those of us who have served an apprenticeship believe that we have some guidance to offer, some suggestions, some warnings. If a course called educational history and philosophy, or school and society, or orientation to teaching can be designed to help the prospective teacher get his bearings, I, for one, am in favor of it, though the answers for the individual must be looked for in an actual school, in an actual community.

Another category of questions which beginners ask relates to teacher and student: "What will my classes be like? Will the students like English, or hate it?"

What should be my attitude toward my students? What are their common needs and interests at various stages of their development? How can I meet these needs and fulfill these interests? How shall I handle disciplinary problems? What are the individual differences in intelligence, physique, maturity, and personality which I can expect to find? How will these differences affect my teaching?" Answering such questions is supposedly the business of courses in educational psychology. Again we know that no course, of itself, can answer all such questions; the answers will differ for different teachers, schools and classrooms. But once more I feel that any college course which is planned to help teachers deal more wisely and skillfully with their students justifies itself in the program of teacher-preparation. Whether courses in educational psychology are at present as helpful as they might be is another question which I do not propose to discuss here. I am trying merely to suggest what I think they should do.

A third category of student questions is concerned with the knowledge and powers of appreciation which the teacher of English must acquire, and how these can be used in teaching. Here the students' questions relate to what is to be taught, as well as how. "How much grammar shall be taught? for what purposes? How do we make lesson plans? It is really wrong to split an infinitive? Is it true that Johnny can't read? How can I help him? How do you teach *Julius Caesar* in the tenth grade? or don't you? How can we grade all those themes?" (I wish I had an answer for that one.)

I wish, too, that I could claim that methods teachers stand on firmer ground than their colleagues in educational psychology and history. However, I shall have to reach the same conclusion as before: the methods course may suggest some tentative answers to questions which cry out for answers, but its usefulness is limited. As a teacher of a methods course,

I know how far from satisfactory it is in helping students find the answers which will be exactly right for them. At best, it can furnish a forum for these questions which must be asked, it can raise others, and it can help the future teacher anticipate his job and begin to think out his role. Let's keep it, by all means.

Here, as far as I am concerned, are the really primary professional courses needed in the education of undergraduates for teaching. With the addition of classroom practice, I believe that work in psychology, orientation to teaching, and methods will give our students as much of the essential professional knowledge about teaching as any courses can. I should like each of these areas to be represented by only one course, if possible, to prevent the duplication and confusion caused by the proliferation of electives. I am well satisfied when I see, in the list of state requirements, a notation like the following: "Measurement is included in the basic courses." That is where I think it should be included, along with materials of teaching, audio-visual aids, record-keeping, curriculum, and general methods—whatever they are.

I have no objection to specialized courses in education for graduate students. For one thing, I hold that it is the legitimate prerogative of the graduate school to confuse people. I continually take advantage of that privilege in my graduate classes. But we all know that the undergraduate labors under one disadvantage which makes confusion peculiarly easy, even when his teachers try to avoid it. He has never taught. He has no way of knowing what we mean—if, indeed, we mean anything—by "the child," "the school," "the administrator." To the student without teaching experience, each course in education is a distinct entity, related to other courses and to real situations only insofar as the professors show the relationships or provide the real situations. So let's permit our

student to work on particular specialties in education after he has done some teaching and discovered that he needs to know some of them.

This brings me to my last point. A few weeks ago, the Dean of the School of Education at my university told me he believes that actual classroom teaching is the very heart of the teacher-preparation program in education. At the risk of seeming to be an utter pragmatist, I'd like to agree with him. My agreement does not rest upon my acceptance of the educational philosophy sometimes known among punsters as learning by Deweying. Rather, I agree because I teach in a high school, with real teachers and students and an administrator. Individual differences appear in Sally and Pete and Jane, not merely in the pages of a textbook. Successes and failures in teaching occur repeatedly, in my teaching and that of my student teachers. Here theory and practice must meet. If I am, to use the familiar phrasing, a pure theorist or narrow subject-matter specialist, my teaching will fail. If my student teacher knows his subject and does not know how to teach it, he will fail. On the other hand, if I am a mere gadgeteer or gimmick man with a bag of pedagogical tricks, my students may be entertained, but they will learn little worth knowing. The same holds for the student teacher if he is merely glib or showy, if he is not fortified with solid knowledge and genuine conviction concerning the importance of what he teaches.

What I should really like to see is the closest possible relationship between all basic courses in education and an actual classroom situation. I do not mean that the teachers of such courses should never lift their eyes beyond the immediate horizon, or that they should fail to consider what should be as well as what is. I certainly do not mean that I have a perfectly logical proposal for this closer integration. I don't know whether we should try a so-called block system or some form of core program, with each educational specialist making his unique contribution within the framework of an actual school situation. Perhaps a starting-point might be to ask each professor of education to teach a high-school class. The result of being asked to practice what one preaches might be a bit dismaying, especially at first, but as the common phrase puts it, it keeps you honest.

I began by promising to be tentative. It may be that I have ended up by sounding quite positive. I do believe, though, that a thirty-credit college requirement, with most of those credits drawn from the elective grab-bag, justifies itself through no rationale that I can discover. I believe, too, that a thorough background of general education and preparation in the major should be combined with a searching consideration of how this preparation should prepare one for teaching. This belief, I trust, is not mere vocationalism, for teaching, to the true teacher, is not just a living, but itself a way of life.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON PREPARATION AND CERTIFICATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

During a meeting held 22 November 1956 in St. Louis, the Committee made several decisions:

(1) The "library" of reports on state certification laws and on studies of certification practices will be enlarged. According to Professor Tuttle, more than twenty schools and associations borrowed the

reports during the past year for use in work shops, dissertations, and in projects on certification. Interested borrowers may write to Professor Tuttle at Fenn College, Cleveland, Ohio, for a list of available reports.

(2) The bibliography of articles and books on the certification of teachers of

English in the secondary schools from 1950 to 1955, edited by Autrey Nell Wiley, will be brought up to date. Copies of the bibliography may be obtained by writing Professor Wiley, Texas College for Women, Denton, Texas.

(3) A detailed statement of the Committee's recommendations of adequate standards for the certification of teachers of English will be put into a booklet or mimeographed folder, which will be sent

upon request to any state or regional association working on the problem. The Committee members agreed that more study was necessary before such publication could be launched.

(4) The Committee will cooperate as a body with other groups working on certification.

AGNES V. BONER, *Recorder*
MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY

AN OPEN LETTER TO ENGLISH TEACHERS

KENNETH A. OLIVER

Dear English Teacher:

You and I have complained pretty hard and pretty steadily about the quality of students who have come to us as freshmen. We concede that *as people* they are wonderful; but somewhere along the line, we have been saying, they have missed out on the training that would have made them able to read and write with an adequacy appropriate to the first year of college. Some of us have gone as far as to shake our heads sadly and suggest that this is after all an age of radio and television—an age for listening and looking, not for writing or even reading. Audio-visual methods, we say—with some bitterness—have come into their own; from now on, many a person will go through life without ever reading a book, once he has tucked that cherished college diploma into his safety deposit box or framed it for his office wall. There is a tonality of helplessness in our remarks. We imply, directly or by our attitudes, that the great age of illiteracy is descending upon us and that there is nothing we can do about it.

This open letter stems from the conviction that there is something we can do about it, something practical and immediate. I have often said, often heard (and I read it again in a recent issue of *College English*), that we are not prepar-

ing teachers for their high-school responsibilities. The utterance was satisfying; the "we" was too much in the nature of a generic term actually to include the first person singular in any humiliating way. But we must realize that no teacher in college or in high school, and no student at the secondary level, is an abstract entity. You and I, individually, are training individual teachers who will in turn train particular students. Every inadequately trained student (among the large number with aptitude) is in some considerable degree the product of an inadequately trained teacher. Who, outside of English departments in colleges and universities, is teaching teacher-candidates the needs of ninth-to-twelfth graders in terms of grammar, spelling, punctuation, vocabulary, and ways to meet those needs? And—more pertinently—who *inside* those departments is doing so?

The above is specific only in terms of persons; let us be specific in terms of the training. We in the colleges take poorly trained freshmen who choose to major with us, and do our best to make of them adequate readers of literature. We labor to help them to understand what it means to read well, to help them acquire the technical and historical knowledge necessary to good reading. We want them to know the difference between realism and

romanticism, between a short story and a novel, between a fresh metaphor and a cliché. We lead them into the paths of research and interpretation, lure them away from that mire of near-plagiarism which consists simply of rehashing what someone else has said. Our method is pressure—the pressure of demand—though we also find time and means to encourage those who respond well to the demands which we make. What we do is good; it does result in mature scholars and in people who for the rest of their lives will be able to read with profit, as well as with increased pleasure. What we do *not* do is to instruct our students how to help children who are struggling through adolescence, children standing blindly at the gates of advanced learning, how to write a sentence—or how to read one. We do not teach them how to make grammar either interesting or useful. In short, we do not teach them to do the very things that they *must* do, if they are to send us freshmen with the abilities whose absence we so roundly deplore.

Consider vocabulary as an example. The ninth or tenth-grader has seldom used a dictionary to look up more than a very few words, and then only to find a meaning that will do for the moment. He has probably never heard of prefixes or suffixes; it has not been called to his attention that many words may be derived from a single stem (or root, or base). With a suitable approach, he could become interested in his language, interested in words. The secondary school, with its leisurely approach, is the place for him to discover and develop an interest until it comes to represent a genuine potential of college competence. Here, vocabulary study could be, and should be, an interesting game, an adventure in the workings of the human mind. Prior to high school, he learned words almost exclusively by context, by hearing them over and over until he gained a vague but generally satisfactory sense of meaning. He doesn't yet know what a splendid

tool for the formulation and expression of ideas words may be. If we do not send into the secondary schools men and women who, themselves, know words in an exciting way, and who know how to go about teaching this expanded knowledge, how can we hope to rely upon these men and women to send us freshmen able to cope with the wide-ranging vocabularies of collegiate work? We blame teachers whom we have failed to prepare; the fault is ours.

Grammar offers as bad an example, if not a worse one. In college we do not want to have to work with grammar. We do so as necessary, and with a sense of time wasted on what ought to have been mastered long ago. We want—and rightly—to polish and expand our students' use of language. We want, no less rightly, to begin to combine maturity of thought with smooth, forceful sentences so organized that ideas build up into convincing structures of meaning. We want to develop the ability to say what is meant: exactly what is meant, with all of the necessary ramifications, modifications, conditions and qualifications. All of this is good; but it is not what our college students will be able to teach in their high-school classes. The young people who come to them from elementary schools will have learned a little—a very little—grammar. Before they will be ready to cope with writing at the level expected of college freshmen, they will need to achieve a conscious mastery of linguistic structure, in order to raise their simple speech to complexity such as college work demands. It will be the responsibility of the secondary English teacher to raise uneven levels of grammatical learning up to pretty full mastery of at least simple and compound sentences, and to bring about some familiarity with complex structures. They will need to teach not only how such sentences are written, but what functions the different structures serve in the formulation and expression of ideas. They will need to bring their

students to see the difference between such sentences as "My old and crotchety uncle will meet me at the train," and "My uncle, who is old and crotchety, will meet me at the train." The secondary student is ready to explore nuances, and to discover how grammar may make them possible. If he is to do so, we must supply him with teachers who themselves know, and who know in terms of particulars and reasons. We cannot escape teaching grammar in college; we must either teach it to a general freshman class which is woefully weak in every aspect of language, or we must bring the teacher-candidates to such levels of knowledge that they can and will teach effectively and with contagious enthusiasm in the high schools.

This is not a complaint against the teaching that is done in college; it is a complaint against the teaching that is *not* done. There is probably no single course that should be deleted because of the charge made in this open letter; courses already in existence may, in some instances, profit by minor modification, and certainly one or two courses for prospective teachers should be taught by every English department from which any secondary teachers emerge. We at Occidental College added, some several years ago, a course in the English Language, which has been called "the most useful course in college" by some generous and thoughtful students who have gone on to teach. But it is at best an attempt to meet half the need. A direct study of particulars of grammar as the secondary teacher must apply them to reading and writing is fully as important. (And, somehow, secondary teachers must be brought to see the absolute necessity of leading their students to write, write, write.) The teaching of literature is one of our reasons for being, not our only reason.

If the college teachers with whom I have talked at conventions are representative of the species, one of our favorite pastimes is the baiting of professional

departments of Education. We like to blame the inadequate products of the secondary schools on them. But, even though we agree completely that they waste time which we could use better, must we not agree that we, too, have failed in important respects? To be more specific: we accuse the Educators of teaching methods at the expense of subject-matter. Very well, then we must accept the burden of teaching that subject-matter necessary for the high-school teachers.

Indeed—though it may be painful to admit it—we have much to learn, much that we will most effectively learn if we will go directly to the high schools as our source. Further, we need the cooperation, and guidance, of our brothers in Education. If we are to take the steps that will lead to effective preparation for college by our young people, we must acquire familiarity with the secondary curriculum, even, to some degree, with the elementary. We must know, in terms of content and method, what has been done by the time the child reaches high school, in spelling, in reading, and in grammar. We must become familiar with the English curricula in the secondary school, for all grades. We must understand what the planners of the curriculum are aiming at, and when we know, and when we have proved that our aim is to help, not to criticize, it may be we can help formulate that curriculum in a way that will raise the linguistic level of college freshmen.

Intensive and extensive work must be done in the analysis of the achievements and weaknesses of pupils at all grades below college. We know our freshmen are weak in vocabulary when they come to us. Do we know at what years the rate of progress in his learning falls far below what he could do and enjoy doing? Do we know at what years new techniques and a wider range of reading materials would be acceptable or desirable? Until we do know such things, how

can we do an optimum job of teaching those who will guide the learning at secondary levels? We know that college freshmen, taken as a whole, are weak in grammar. Have we ever used eighth-to-twelfth grade compositions as materials for analysis in training those who will teach grammar at secondary levels? Do we know what weaknesses predominate? Do we know how those weaknesses relate to the selection and amount of reading done? Or how much writing was and is being done? How can we hope to send down to those pupils men and women who will make the most of their teaching opportunities unless and until we have specific knowledge about the aspects of secondary studies pertaining to language?

Is it even possible that we are teaching our teacher-candidates, indirectly, a contempt for the easy, obvious, often didactic literature which is (and long has been) most successfully taught in the high school? "The function of literature," a colleague recently asserted, "is to convey the rich and deeply complex texture of life as experience." This is clearly a truth of a high order. But one thing is wrong; what he spoke of was not *the* function of literature, but *a* function, one of many. Surely the functions of literature begin to operate before the child reaches school, when he learns to appreciate rhyme, rhythm, plot. He is learning form, and the medium of instruction is literature. He will continue to learn these things for many years, sometimes, we hope, going beyond the elementary level of comprehension. Again, through the medium of form, and the satisfaction which it brings, he will learn attitudes which are woven into literature, attitudes which he could not yet formulate for himself, but which he needs if he is to be a successful member of our society. We call this acculturation; ask yourself how much of our children's literature is pointed toward this end.

Further, literature is used as a medium for teaching the child some familiarity

with the world beyond his immediate observable environment. For this, stories of travel and exploration serve splendidly. Later, the complexities of life, in terms of social problems, will be found in stories and poems and plays. These functions may well be labelled propagandistic, in large part. But they are functions, and probably necessary. Among the useful functions, let us not forget that of establishing the habit of reading, together with essential knowledge of vocabulary and conventions of structure to make that reading profitable. Add to these the pleasurable filling of leisure hours, the activation of the imagination, familiarization of the reader with the life of past generations (a function which literature shares with history, and in which both are essential to a job well done), and—not to finish, but to stop—the cultivation of an active aesthetic sense. If we are adequately to prepare teachers for their tasks in the secondary schools, we must make them aware in high degree of these and other functions of literature, together with a corresponding list of functions of writing as a human activity. We must know and teach the appropriateness of each function for the various levels of education prior to college. Here again, our colleagues in Education will be able to help us. We have much to learn.

"But our aim," numerous voices will object, "is to bring our students to fuller maturity as educated men and women, not to engage in professional training, and especially not to take them back over their high school subjects." Agreed. And if we are willing to work with inadequately prepared college students, if we are willing to accept almost complete illiterates into our classes, let us go on as we are doing. It is my thesis that ten years of hard work, based on an acceptance of our responsibility to give our teacher-candidates the training which we know they must have will produce a discernible improvement in the quality of freshmen in our colleges, at least in re-

spect to reading and writing. Conversely, if we do not accept this responsibility, the quality will go not up but down.

There is a related matter of deep concern to all of us. Most teachers of subjects other than English receive little training in language after the freshman year of college. Unless we can bring about better training by the end of that freshman year, we are going to have our secondary schools filled with teachers who are themselves ignorant of all but the simplest structures. The trend has begun; with the rapid influx of students into all schools, and with the greatly heightened demand for teachers at all levels, the pace of this trend can only be speeded up.

At the expense of reiteration, I must assert that this open letter does not call for the substitution of other courses for what we now offer. The training we give in literature is already minimal at best at the undergraduate level. What it does call for is an immediate recognition of a responsibility which we have been prone to lay, at least by implication, at other people's feet. And, accepting this responsibility as our own, we need to do two things: (1) begin at once to teach what we can that may be useful; (2) begin at once the long process of learning what more we can do that will be better. We have nothing to lose but illiteracy.

In Defense of Robert Cohn

ARTHUR L. SCOTT

PERHAPS the most fashionable whipping boy of modern American literature is Robert Cohn in Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* (1926). The fashion seems to spring from two sources: (1) reacting emotionally to the story, the average reader is embarrassed to sympathize with the one out-of-step character who is openly despised by all his companions, and (2) the professional critic can make a tidy explication of the book's theme by pointing up the triumph of Pedro Romero's hard and clean masculinity over the soggy sentimentalism of an intruder who fails to observe "the code."

Now, it is all right to dislike Robert Cohn and to regard him as an unwelcome outsider. But we must give even the devil his due, they say, and it is a grave mistake either to condemn Cohn as "one of the damned" (Delmore Schwartz) or to deride him as "a shallow sentimentalist" (Theodore Bardacke) or "an unfortunate romantic oaf" (W. M. Frohock). It is the mistake of adopting uncritically the prejudices of the book's

characters. A worse mistake would be difficult. "I hope that even when I write a novel in the first person," says Hemingway, "you do not hold me responsible for the opinions of the narrator nor of his characters."

In his well-known Modern Library introduction, Henry Seidel Canby asserts, "In *The Sun Also Rises* there is, frankly, only one character indubitably worth saving, and that is Jake." (Pedro Romero, it is pretty well agreed, is in no need of being saved.) At the risk of being charged with nefracaniophilia (love for the underdog), I suggest that Robert Cohn, too, is either worth saving or is in no need of salvation. In support of this suggestion, I shall indulge in no further gobbledygook, but simply take a clear look at Robert Cohn and at the reasons for his curious unpopularity.

At the outset, let us not blink the fact that Cohn is a Jew. Partly because of his race he is a kind of D. P.—suffering much of the anguish of the socially displaced. Mike and Bill dislike Jews. Time

after time they make nasty remarks about Cohn's Jewishness (Mod. Lib. ed., pp. 98, 104, 148, 168, 170, 184, 211, 214, 218). Even Jake is not immune to this racial bias (p. 10). It is an interesting fact that every one of these ten anti-Semitic comments was deleted from the first Bantam edition of the book, without the knowledge of either the author or his regular publisher, Scribner's. When this was brought to Hemingway's notice recently, he was justly annoyed by the implications and said, "If you think the book is anti-Semitic you must be out of your mind or at least not in full possession of your critical faculties." The book, of course, is not anti-Semitic. But the point is that at least two of its outspoken characters *are*; and their prejudice not only colors the story but also blinds them to many of the virtues of this young Jew.

Robert Cohn, remember, is the only character whom the author has rooted in the past. As a "very shy and thoroughly nice boy, . . . frank and simple," Cohn attended Princeton, where he was made race-conscious for the first time. He turned somewhat bitter. In the years to come he lost most of his money and "hardened into a rather unattractive mould under domestic unhappiness with a rich wife." Divorced now at the age of thirty-four, he has been for a number of years in the clutches of the jealous and designing Frances Clyne. "I rather liked him," says Jake, "and evidently she led him quite a life." Not jealous yet, Jake *ought* to appreciate this friendly young Jew who, like him, is a serious writer and a fine bridge and tennis player. At military school Cohn "played a very good end on the football team" and at Princeton he was a boxing champion long remembered by his coach. Obviously, he is no sissy. Nor is he a bully "who answers all criticism with an uppercut" (Maxwell Geismar). Where men are concerned, as we shall see, Cohn displays admirable self-control in replying to insults with the soft word instead of the hard fist. How

easy it would have been to show off before his "lady"—as Romero does in the bullring. And where women are concerned, Cohn is still more polite and considerate. Not only has he long been kind and faithful to Frances, but even after he falls in love with Brett, he exhibits toward Frances the same decent responsibility which Jake shows when he leaves money for the street-walker. As for his love affair at San Sebastian—and remember that such things as wining and wenching do not violate the "Hemingway code"—Brett confesses, "He behaved rather well too. He gets a little dull." Keep in mind two facts: (1) there is no issue of disloyalty here, since Cohn does not know Jake's love for Brett, and (2) our narrator—however honest—is a man who admits, "I was blind, unforgivingly jealous of what had happened to him [Cohn]."

If Cohn gets "a little dull" at the beach, no doubt he gets much duller at the fiesta, for few things are more annoying on a determined binge than an aloof and sober companion. "Why don't you ever get drunk, Robert?" Mike shouts. Jake drinks, he confesses, because, "Under the wine I lost the disgusted feeling and was happy. It seemed they were all such nice people." Well, Cohn tries it, only to pass out on some wine-casks; and the next day Mike is at him again: "Do you think you belong here among us? People who are out to have a good time? . . . Go away, for God's sake. Take that sad Jewish face away." Yet nobody resents the fact that another athlete, the young matador, also refuses to get drunk.

Less forgivable to his companions, however, than his sobriety is his mere *coming* to Pamplona in the first place. To them he seems to be flaunting his conquest—silently bragging that he has slept with this desirable woman. The code demands that amorous diversions be casual and brief. "Why do you follow Brett around?" Mike challenges. "Haven't you any manners?" Cohn's "mistake" is in taking an "affair of the heart" really to

heart. At the age of thirty-four he has fallen passionately in love for the first time. Idolizing Brett, his "frank and simple" nature cannot believe, in view of their affair, that his love is not reciprocated. Love, we say, is blind. But all the world is supposed to love a lover, too, whereas Cohn suddenly encounters a reversal of values which makes the romantic lover a mere creature of contempt. Even Brett—his mistress so recently—treats him like "a perfect stranger." No wonder he goes "crazy," as he puts it. And once he has made this naive error of mistaking Brett's hot fancy for love, he is more to be pitied than censured for what ensues quite naturally, as we shall see in a moment.

Before we examine the violent results of this error, however, we should frankly face the charge of "kiss and tell." John Atkins speaks for most critics when denouncing Cohn for "being altogether too loquacious about certain 'banned' subjects." Cohn *does* kiss and tell, true; but Brett tells *first*. If Cohn behaves badly by telling Jake and Bill of the affair, how much worse does Brett herself behave by giving Cohn's love-letters to Mike to read! Where is the sex-and-suffering-in-secrecy part of the code here?

It is demonstrably unfair to Cohn, moreover, to accuse him (along with Mike) of "obsessed sexuality" (Donald Heiney). Until he meets Brett, whom he longs to marry, Cohn has not "looked at another woman" than Frances for two and a half years. Brett herself, of course, wins the prize for promiscuity; but, in truth, there is also more "obsessed sexuality" in the greatly admired matador, who at the age of nineteen takes Brett to his bed within minutes of their second meeting. And if we object to Cohn's dragging his naked emotions before Jake, how much more are we obliged to condemn Brett for openly slobbering her lust for Romero. As for Mike, with his bawdy shouts of "I say, Brett, you *are* a lovely piece . . . let's turn in early,"—

he is hardly the one to criticize Cohn for merely making calf-eyes. Because Robert Cohn is a passive character, quiet and shy, and because he never tries to defend himself in argument, the reader is apt to succumb too readily to the prejudices of his more aggressive, articulate companions, whose opinions—God knows!—the reader has no valid cause to respect.

This brings us to the climactic scenes where Cohn's forbearance finally snaps and he knocks around Jake, Mike, and the young bullfighter. Jake has just pimped for, and Romero is debauching, Cohn's loved one; and yet, for some reason, the critics view Cohn's actions in this crisis as being basically unsporting and shameful. Writes Carlos Baker:

[Romero] is used as a force of antithesis, manly, incorruptible, healthy, courageous, of complete integrity and self-possession. Beside him Mike seems a poor player indeed, and he [Romero] conspicuously embodies the qualities which Cohn lacks. His control accents Cohn's emotionalism; his courage, Cohn's essential cowardice; his self-reliance, Cohn's miserable fawning dependence; his dignity, Cohn's self-pity; his natural courtesy, Cohn's basic rudeness and egotism.

This standard interpretation perpetuates a purely emotional reading of the book and dignifies this reading with a clear-cut scholarly thesis of an antithesis. A more objective consideration of the facts and motives, however, reveals no such convenient antithesis between Cohn and Romero. The two men actually have more in common with each other than with any of the other characters. Cohn is obviously out of place amid all this frenetic joy-seeking. So is Romero. As old Montoya, the aficionado hotel owner, says: "He's such a fine boy. . . . He shouldn't mix in that stuff." And when Jake deliberately draws the matador into "that stuff," he does so knowing that he himself will merit the contempt of all the Spaniards.

Not only are Cohn and Romero both "outsiders," they both love not wisely

but too well. But at least they do *love*. If Brett's fiancé does not care that Jake has sent her off to bed with the matador, Cohn cares and he cares deeply. Ducking Jake's wild swing, he knocks him down and rages into the matador's room. Surprised in his love-making, Romero is understandably furious; but deep within he must sympathize more with the protective jealousy and honor of Cohn than with the spiritless alcoholic complaisance of Mike Campbell, the lady's fiancé. Another point is also involved here. Everyone admires the pride and courage of Romero in refusing to admit defeat in this fight. Why, then, is it fashionable to condemn Cohn for "refusing to admit defeat" in his courtship of Brett (Atkins, Schwartz, *et al*)? Have the other old maxims also lost their charm: All's fair in love and war; faint heart n'er won fair lady? It must be a cold critic, indeed, who asks the young man to give up the one and only love of his life without fighting to the last.

In this scene Cohn makes a fool of himself, perhaps, but at least he is God's fool. It is to miss the essence of the Cohn-Campbell contrast to speak of Cohn's "original state of cynicism" and to add, "Idealism and sensitivity have been killed in the war, and now the 'lost generation'—Mike and Cohn—come to the surface" (Heiney). Furthermore, even though Romero may well be "the secular saint of Hemingway's morality" (Schwartz), it does not necessarily follow that Cohn, because he battles this "saint," is the devil's advocate. Too long we have seen "Robert Cohn, the pomaded sulker in the tent, and Romero, the manly and unspoiled warrior" (Baker). Surely, Cohn does not sulk in his tent here and surely two worthy rivals have often done battle for the same fair maiden or for honor itself! When you get right down to it, Cohn attacks the whole sordid intrigue with the same fiery passion which Romero himself would certainly display, were their roles reversed. Nor is it to

Cohn's discredit that he emerges an easy victor due to his boxing skill.

Which brings up the disputed point: Was Cohn the victor or was he—as the critics insist—actually the vanquished? "A polarity has been established," says Melvin Backman, "between Cohn, unmanly representative of the lost generation, and the primitive, Pedro Romero. When these two fought, the hard male core of the young bullfighter could not be touched by Cohn's punches, and he reduced Cohn to a whimpering child." And Delmore Schwartz agrees that, "Cohen [*sic*] is finally defeated by the matador's fortitude and thus his moral superiority." At this point we should ask ourselves what Cohn would do were the roles reversed and Romero kept knocking *him* down. Most likely he would keep getting up, just as Romero does. He would not quit either. In his nature there is no evidence of "essential cowardice." Moreover, the charge that Romero reduces him "to a whimpering child" ignores two important facts. First, this entire episode is related second-hand by the biased and boozy Mike—*en garde!*—and it is Mike and only Mike who concludes that, "He [Romero] ruined Cohn. You know I don't think Cohn will ever want to knock people about again." Second, it is far less likely that Cohn is crying because Romero refuses to quit than because—when Cohn "wanted to make an honest woman of her"—"Brett gave him what for. She told him off . . . telling him not to be a ruddy ass." In what way has Romero "ruined Cohn"? Would Cohn prove himself more the man by slugging his helpless victim until he is completely unconscious? Just what is the point here? In the gesture traditional of sports, Cohn tries to help his battered rival—even shake hands with him—but gets a fist in the face. Is Cohn *really* the more contemptible for this, or does the shamed and shabby fiancé merely want to *think* so!

If Cohn is actually "ruined"—and per-

haps he is for a long while to come—it is not by Romero but by Brett. Romero is nothing to him. Only Brett has the power to ruin him. He has idolized her, been her lover, endured gross insults for her, and now he has fought for her. His ultimate reward is to have her call him “a ruddy ass,” refuse his outstretched hand, and throw herself lovingly on the other man. This is a shattering experience. He leaves town quickly. Not because of Romero or his threats—Romero is a mere pawn—but because his glorious romantic illusion has finally been shattered irremediably. His queen has proven herself a sham, a fraud, a trumpety social gewgaw. As does the Great Gatsby’s, so does the romanticism of Robert Cohn finally break up like glass against the adamant of careless sophistication.

So Robert Cohn flees from Pamplona not a coward, but a disillusioned romantic. An emotional, serious, and unworldly young man, he has been drawn by love into a clique of cynical and world-weary sophisticates in the midst of their most frantic revels. If there actually *was* a “lost generation”—Hemingway calls this Gertrude Stein phrase a piece of “splendid bombast”—it is represented here not by Cohn, but by Brett and her “chaps.” Cohn and Romero are both attracted, but both manage to escape its crippling contagion in the end—the former as a result of shocking disillusionment, the latter by grace of Brett’s final *beau geste*. How permanent their escape is we do not know. Canby may well be right in stating, “Poor Robert Cohn’s tragedy is that of a soul always in escape. . . .” If it is true (and I doubt it very much) that “Hemingway rejects these wasters and idlers and lost intellectuals” (Edgar Johnson), we must exclude Cohn from this company. Hemingway’s old Paris friend, John Peale Bishop, specifically includes Cohn in his sweeping censure of the novel’s expatriates: “For they are all of them, amusing as they are, aimless and will-less; they are so completely devoid of spiritual life

that neither stupefying drink nor aware intelligence can save them.” Unfortunately, not even the *flattering* part of this description fits Cohn.

Completely to whitewash Robert Cohn, of course, is neither possible nor desirable. He is a complex character towards whom we must all share, to some extent, the ambivalent feeling of Jake, Bill, and Brett, who admit that he is “nice” but “awful.” Although for once the famed Hemingway dialogue fails to *exhibit* the point, Cohn apparently has an unconscious manner or mien which rubs his associates the wrong way. Socially he must be even more maladroit than the narrative actually demonstrates. Despite Jake’s admitted jealousy, there seems to be some truth in his comment that, “Cohn had a wonderful quality of bringing out the worst in anybody.” These vague personality defects, however, are of less moment to the critics than is Cohn’s insensitivity to the social and moral climate of his companions. Leo Gurko recently observed, “To use one of Hemingway’s key words, Cohn is not *aficionado*. . . . The fact is that he refuses to accept things as they are—the cardinal sin in the Hemingway lexicon.” True, Cohn is not *aficionado*; “he does not play the game according to the rules” (Schwartz). But then life is not a game, and is it not possible that these “rules” are wrong? Perhaps the so-called “Hemingway lexicon” is at fault on so many counts that Cohn should be respected, rather than despised, for not conforming. One need not go back to Emerson for help on this. It is obvious that, unless we honestly admire this code by which Brett’s crowd lives, we must not be too rough on Robert Cohn for “refusing to accept things as they are.” To conform is easy; the earthworm does it. Strength, not weakness, makes Cohn different from the others.

This brings us back to where we started. Robert Cohn has been a favorite whipping-boy for much too long. Almost every critic has looked him over—to

borrow Mark Twain's expression—"like as if he was hunting for a place on him that he could despise the most." In their fiesta mood, Jake and his friends naturally "hate his damned suffering," but still Jake is more charitable than most critics: "Everybody behaves badly. Give them the proper chance. . . . I'd be as big an ass as Cohn." (Which, incidentally, lends support to Edmund Wilson's belief that Jake "has been saved by his physical disability.") Every ledger has two sides and among Cohn's assets are the facts that he is talented, serious-minded, and drinks only in moderation. He is polite and friendly, soft-spoken and shy, clean-cut, athletic, and a good loser in sports. Though thirsting "to live," he is relatively continent; though emotional and skilled with his fists, he generally keeps tight rein on himself. Perhaps not a virtue, but no vice, either: he is unworldly and naively romantic. He is sympathetic to suffering, generous, loyal, trusting, courageous, and intelligent.

This is not to argue, of course, that Robert Cohn is without faults. But his *actual* faults are much less flagrant than charged, and they are far more like those of the average person in any age than are the faults of the neurotic hedonists he gets mixed up with. Although the novel

presents an eloquent picture of the allegedly "lost generation," Maxwell Geismar is correct in noting that, "It is not like life." Consequently, it is unfair to dismiss Robert Cohn as "'messy' in every way" (Philip Young), when actually it is the *society* that is "messy." This is Hemingway's point. We must not make Cohn whipping-boy for his frenzied companions. He is the most normal character in the book. If this sounds like the old saw, "Everybody is out of step but my son John," that is pretty much what it is meant to sound like. Robert Cohn is out of step because he is listening to a different drummer—a better drummer, too—the one which most people in their better moments try to march to. But in certain extremities of life the steady beat of this drum is drowned out amid wild tumults which drive the irresolute masses astray into such moral and social wastelands as are depicted in *The Sun Also Rises*.

At the end of the book, when the drinking, dancing, bullfighting, brawling, and mad carousal are all ended for the moment, Bill Gorton finally reflects, "I feel sorry about Cohn. He had an awful time." Thirty years later we should feel even more sorry. Robert Cohn is *still* having an awful time.

Hemingway on Writing

ROBERT C. HART

Hemingway's thought on the craft of fiction has received some attention ever since the twenties, when *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Farewell to Arms* brought their author to fame as the chronicler of the lost generation. Most of Hemingway's ideas appeared as gratuitous intrusions into interviews or remarks tacked on to published work devoted to other matters, and so were attended to only by reviewers who wanted

evidence of the simplism of a primitive, and by a few fellow writers such as Fitzgerald, to whom they were the final authority in questions of literary art. More recently, full-fledged studies of Hemingway by scholars like Carlos Baker, Philip Young, and Charles Fenton give considerable and serious attention to Hemingway's esthetic. But these books, devoted as they are to the basis and scope of Hemingway's career and work, neces-



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sarily present only a partial treatment of this one phase of his activity. What I propose to do in this article, therefore, is to make a fuller reconstruction of his ideas on writing than has yet been done, so that the teacher of literature, the teacher of writing, or indeed the professional writer, may see the practicality and essential coherence in the thought of one of our most eminent living authors.

To Hemingway, the creative writer stands in sharp contrast to the journalist. The creative writer is a *maker*, in a sense that echoes the Greek *poietes*, for he "makes" a product which never existed before. In contrast to the reporter, he makes up something new instead of describing something that already exists. If, as every artist must, he draws on his experiences with real life persons and places, he nevertheless transmutes them into his own creations. As a literary artist, he attempts to create the *illusion* of real-life experience; he does not, as the reporter does, attempt to present a copy of real life. Hemingway says that imaginative writing can be "round and solid" and living because it is "created," "made," not "described." What the writer produces must be a powerfully distilled extract from the sum-total of himself—"from his head, from his heart, from all there is of him."

The creative writer stands in contrast also to the mechanical artificer in words, or, as Hemingway bluntly calls him, "faker." Whereas the creative writer produces something emotionally realized and organically fused, the artificer puts together a piece of joinery work from what he has acquired second-hand through reading or hearsay. Hemingway defines "faking" as writing about what one has no knowledge of through direct personal experience. A good example is the battle scene in Willa Cather's book about World War I, *One of Ours*, a scene which Hemingway claims is taken straight out of *Birth of a Nation*. Or he defines it as putting in "mystery" where there is none

by use of rhetoric instead of simple English; and on this score he condemns large sections of *Moby-Dick*. Genuine creation, on the other hand, demands that the writer assimilate the facts of his experience until he can "see the world clearly and see it whole."

Hemingway's view of the writer's craft is centered in "truth"—artistic truth. Truth in fiction is not factual truth, not, as we may infer from his distinction between creative writer and reporter, a report of what *has* happened, but, in something like Aristotle's sense, an account of what *could* happen within the limits of the possibilities of life as we know it here and now. "After you learn to write your whole object is to convey everything, every sensation, sight, feeling, place and emotion to the reader." Tolstoy's *Cossacks*, for example, creates the illusion of the summer heat and the mosquitoes, and the feel of the forest in different seasons, so that in reading it Hemingway found himself "living in that Russia again." Likewise with several other well-known books. *War and Peace* is a masterpiece of "true descriptions of war and people," as Tolstoy was the supreme master for "inventing with truth." The stories of Turgenev make the Russia of the time of our Civil War "as real as any other place, as Michigan or the prairie north of town," and through Turgenev Hemingway "had lived there." *The Charterhouse of Parma* takes the reader right into the battle of Waterloo; and *The Red Badge of Courage* is "that great boy's dream of war that was to be truer to how war is than anything the boy who wrote it would ever live to see."

A story is "true" when it seems to the reader as though it were "as it would truly be," and becomes in the reader's mind as much a part of his past as his own personal experience. The writer's task is "to project the truth in such a way that it becomes a part of the experience of the person who reads it." "All good

books are alike in that they are truer than if they had really happened and after you are finished reading one you will feel that all that happened to you and afterwards it all belongs to you." And Hemingway is at pains to separate this artistic truth from journalistic truth, the truth of a report. The latter depends on something (actual happenings) outside itself to make it "complete"; it is, we may say, a sign pointing to something beyond itself. When the outside events which have made it complete have, like yesterday's news, faded into the past and out of memory, the report dies.

Not so the artistic work of fiction. The work of fiction, being made up as something new out of the raw material of the author's remembered experience—coming out of *him* rather than directly out of the world around him—is complete in itself, independent of the flux of external events. It is a symbol, not a sign. It may be symbolic, or synecdochic, of all experience, for, Hemingway says, "if you can get to see [the world] clear and as a whole," then "any part you make will represent the whole if it is made truly." Or it may, as we have seen with the books of Tolstoy, Turgenev, Stendhal, and Crane, represent the experience of a place and an era. Or, finally, it may stand for all the experience in a certain kind of activity, as El Sordo's fight in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* stands, in Hemingway's opinion, for "every guerrilla action ever fought." In whatever sense, as a symbol it is "absolute" and "endures forever"; and so his earliest search was for "the real thing . . . which would be as valid in a year or in ten years or, with luck and if you stated it truly enough, always."

The concept of truth in Hemingway's thought is radial: it has several implications for executing the work of fiction. For one thing, it implies something already briefly mentioned: the emotional realization of subject-matter prior to writing. It is not enough to have factual, observational knowledge of materials—

people, things, events in a certain area of activity like war, fishing, bull fighting. The reporter gets this kind of knowledge, and, as Hemingway told Ford Madox Ford back in the early twenties, it is knowledge without understanding. Nor is it enough to acquire knowledge through study or listening to others; the artificer so acquires his information; "Books should be about the people you know, that you love and hate, and not about the people you study up about." The creative writer must feel emotionally the place everything occupies within his own total vision of the experience he is projecting. Maxwell Perkins, Hemingway's editor at Scribner's, reports how, when he was fishing with Hemingway in the Gulf Stream, he asked why Hemingway did not write about that activity:

. . . "I will in time, [Hemingway said,] but I couldn't do it yet," and seeing I did not get his meaning, he pointed to a pelican that was flapping along, and said, "See that pelican? I don't know yet what his part is in the scheme of things." He did know factually in his head, but he meant that it all had to become so deeply familiar that you know it emotionally, as if by instinct, and that only came after a long time, and through long unconscious reflection.

Secondly, "truth" demands objectivity. The writer must refuse to bend the work (its people and actions) to a preconceived idea. He must not start out a story determined that such and such are the roles the people must play, and such and such the events that will take place. Thus Hemingway condemns Tolstoy, a writer he admires above virtually every other, for the "part [of *War and Peace*] where Tolstoy tampered with the truth to make it fit his conclusions." It is the writer's business to "understand," not "judge," and, if he abandons it and forces his materials, the illusion of real-life experience will be destroyed. Hemingway himself starts to make up a story and then has happen "what would have to happen as it goes along." He, the author, explores and

finds out as he presses forward; in a manner of speaking, he writes to solve a problem, not to confirm a solution already laid down.

Objectivity also requires that the author's personal ideals be kept out of the story—that is, the author's notions of what should be or should happen, in contradistinction to what *would* be or would happen according to the laws of probability. The author must not, for instance, put into the mouths of characters speeches which he would prefer them to make instead of the speeches such people would make. In a well-known controversy with Aldous Huxley on this point, Hemingway, who had been accused by Huxley of making all his characters lowbrows, said:

When writing a novel a writer should create living people; people not characters. A character is a caricature. . . . If the people a writer is making talk of old masters; of music; of modern painting; of letters; or of science then they should talk of these things in the novel. If they do not talk of those subjects and the writer makes them talk of them he is a faker. . . . People in a novel, not skilfully constructed characters, must be projected from the writer's assimilated experience, from his knowledge, from his head, from his heart and from all there is of him.

The writer's conscience in this respect must be "as unchanging as the standard meter in Paris."

Moreover, the author must not impose themes or ideologies on his work. Meaning in fiction is implicit—it must arise out of the work, not be laid on. And if the work is created "truly," it will have all the implications, the meanings, which the author is capable of conceiving; whereas if the author has explicitly preached or pointed or attempted to enforce meaning through "rhetoric," distrusting the power of an objective account to carry its own burden of meaning, the illusion will be spoiled and the work will be a failure as art. And even great artists

have failed in this respect. The rhetorical is what Hemingway holds against Melville, and the "ponderous and messianic thinking" of Tolstoy, he tells us, is what taught him (Hemingway) "to distrust [his] own thinking with a capital T and to try to write as truly, as straightly, as objectively and as humbly as possible."

But objectivity goes beyond character-creation and ideology to the structure of the literary work. For when an author puts personal essays into the mouths of his characters he is merely "decorating": he is dressing his work up with what is non-functional or even malfunctioning. Beauty is function—that is the correct principle; or, as Hemingway himself puts it, "prose is architecture, not interior decoration." The book will hold together as a single work, an organic whole, only if the author eschews all such beautifying and obeys the law of necessity: everything included must be necessary to the whole, what is necessary being determined by the demands of character and action within the illusion of real-life experience which the author is trying to create. Thus, on this principle, *War and Peace* needs much cutting, whereas *The Red Badge of Courage* is architecturally perfect—"as much of one piece as a great poem is."

Finally, objectivity requires that the writer present the data which incite the emotion rather than tell the reader what the emotion itself is. It is a matter of putting down the facts—the stimuli (chiefly sharp, concrete images) and the actions of the characters—and letting the reader infer for himself what the emotions of the characters are and react emotionally himself as the data warrant. The author does not overtly point the reader to certain feelings; he selects those facts which, according to his conception, carry the emotion and lets them speak for themselves. So important are the concrete images of experience to the writer that Hemingway refers to them as the "rain" which gives life to literature:

[A] good writer . . . finds rain to be made of knowledge, experience, wine, bread, oil, salt, vinegar, bed, early mornings, nights, days, the sea, men, women, dogs, beloved motor cars, bicycles, hills and valleys, the appearance and disappearance of trains on straight and curved tracks, love, honor and disobey, music, chamber music and chamber pots, negative and positive Wassermanns, the arrival and non-arrival of expected munitions and/or reinforcements, replacements or your brother. All these are a part of rain to a good writer along with your hated or beloved mother, may she rest in peace or in pieces, porcupine quills, cock grouse drumming on a bass-wood log, the smell of sweet grass and fresh-smoked leather....

But rigorous selection is most important. "Piled-on detail," such as Zola used in *The Debacle*, defeats its own purpose, for it makes writing "as dead and unconvincing as a steel engraving"; that is, it destroys the illusion of real-life experience. Hemingway tells us that he began his career trying to put down only "the sequence of motion and fact which made the emotion," seeming to believe that if he selected just the right details he would not have to tell the reader how to feel; the reader would have the sensation of being in contact not with words, but with the people and things themselves. He has gone so far as to suggest that every scene has a key image which is the magnetic center of emotion in that scene. In the same passage he tells how, after witnessing a goring in a bullfight, he racked his mind for the polar image of that event:

I tried to remember what it was that seemed just out of my remembering and that was the thing I had really seen, and finally, remembering all around it, I got it. When he [the matador] stood up, his face white and dirty and the silk of the breeches opened from waist to knee, it was the dirtiness of the rented breeches, the dirtiness of his slit underwear and the clean, clean, unbearably clean whiteness of the thigh bone I had seen, and it was that which was important.

The writer to be objective, then, must

furnish the reader not reactions to the facts but the facts themselves. To do so requires diction which crystallizes these facts. Equally important, it requires language "stripped clean"—nouns and verbs without their distracting qualifiers; for the image cannot be conveyed in firm outline by verbs and nouns with a clutter of modifiers hanging to them like barnacles. "Easy writing makes hard reading," Hemingway told Samuel Putnam, but "stripping language clean, down to the bone, makes writing hard." His ambition was "to write books without any extra words in them"; and he would go so far as to "cut out a thousand words to make one word important." The first task he set himself as a writer was to convey the total experience of an event in as few words as possible—and in the words of spoken English, which are "the words that survive in the language." And his last appraisal of his work was that he had contributed to American literature "a certain clarification of the language which is now in the public domain." It is clear that the demands of "truth"—emotional realization of subject matter and objective presentation of character and action—led him to make that contribution.

In order to be a literary artist, the writer must train himself. But he must have imagination to start with. Imagination is a *donnée*, a gift, "something we get for nothing." It may be racial memory; certainly experience feeds the imagination; some men have greater imaginations than others; but there is nothing to be said about its operation, because "nobody knows a thing about it." Together with imagination, the writer must have talent, honesty, seriousness, and a capacity for hard work.

Next, the writer should "know everything"—which is, of course, impossible, but it is the true ideal. He should value the knowledge gained from full and direct experience above facility of expression, and avoid locking himself up in his study with a "well-oiled tool" of expression and

nothing to write about. Moreover, he should read every great work of fiction of the past so that he knows what he has to "beat." He is in the position of competitor with all those writers who preceded him in mastering their craft and producing lasting works of fiction. He is obligated not to do over again the same thing they have done (i.e., write on the same type of experience) unless he can do the job better, and he must be constantly measuring himself against their achievement. The writers whom Hemingway recommends for study to an apprentice in the craft include a good many of the great authors of fiction, English, American, Russian, French, of the nineteenth century, as well as a few contemporary Europeans and others—notably Fielding, Kipling, Twain, James, Crane, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Turgenev, Chekhov, Stendhal, Flaubert, Maupassant, Mann, and Joyce.

Training itself consists chiefly of observing people and actions. Observation of people has the purpose of developing insight into the way they "work"—preparing the imagination for treatment of human motivation; for after observing them the writer must attempt to infer what they had in mind when they said or did something. The understanding of people permits full emotional realization of characters in fiction, so that whatever the writer puts down about them will have the validity of any part of an organic whole. Observation of action—e.g., the way people enter and seat themselves in a motor car, the way a fish pulls the fishing line taut—has as its chief purpose the training of facility in presentation. That is, the writer is to practice describing such actions until he can capture their exact look and feel and no longer has to think about them when the necessity of presenting them in a work of fiction arises. Writing down these observations Hemingway believes to be indispensable "finger exercises" for the apprentice in the craft.

The process of creation begins with long pondering and with the gestation of the writer's own direct experience in his unconscious mind. Full emotional realization of material means that it must become a part of the self and take its place, as Perkins observed, within the context of one's total thought and temperament. Such prolonged "soaking," as Hemingway calls it, will probably take years, but it will enable the writer, when he comes to project that experience in fictional form, to "omit things he knows" and still make the reader "feel those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them." Only the journalist observes and reports immediately afterwards; the creative writer must wait, as Hemingway himself did before writing of the Spanish Civil War in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and as he thought Malraux should have done before attempting to use the revolution in China in *Man's Fate*.

The actual writing is long, hard work. It must be done most carefully: the first draft itself must be written slowly and thoughtfully, with every word laid in like a brick. "Speed-writing"—attempting to get everything down in one grand rush—is liable to disaster because the writer loses control of his structure and does not know when he is finished whether he has a novel or not. The writing should be done in small pieces of a few hundred words each day, but in order to keep the pieces fused together the writer should begin each stint by reading over all or most of what has already been written and should end each stint before he is written out. All writing in the first draft should be in longhand so that the text remains "plastic" and open to revision, not frozen solid as it is when typewritten. After the first draft, revisions and a second draft must follow. Revision is largely a matter of excision—all the "fake and overblown," all not absolutely necessary to the story as a whole must be cut out ruthlessly; but rewording passages for accuracy of impression is also impor-

tant. Once the manuscript is as good as he can make it, Hemingway stipulates that there must be no changes: the publisher must accept it as it is or reject it altogether. Then the author's third and last "shot" at the book comes when he gets the galley proofs and makes final corrections. Once it is published, he feels the overwhelming sense of relief that it is "behind" him.

By way of summary, then, it may be said that Hemingway's statements on writing constitute a coherent view of the craft of fiction. His notions are centered in the concept of "truth"—the illusion of real-life experience—which it is the author's business to produce. He generates it by emotional realization of his subject matter and effects it by objective presentation. In so producing it, the author creates a literary work of art which is absolute and may last forever.

Note: References to Hemingway's quoted or paraphrased remarks are given by paragraphs. (2) *Esquire*, 4 (Oct. 1935), 21; *Death in the*

Afternoon, 192. (3) *Esquire*, 21; Edmund Wilson, *The Shores of Light*, 118; *Death*, 53, 54, 278; *Green Hills of Africa*, 20. (4) *Esquire*, 174A; *Green Hills*, 108; *Men at War*, xvii-xx. (5) *Esquire*, 21; Henry Hart, ed., *The Writer in a Changing World*, 69; *Esquire*, 2 (Dec. 1934), 26; *Esquire*, 4, 21. (6) *Death*, 278; John J. McCaffery, ed., *Ernest Hemingway*, 53; *Men at War*, xv; *Green Hills*, 109; *Death*, 2. (7) *Transatlantic Review*, 2 (Sept. 1924), 300; *Esquire*, 2, 26; John R. Wheelock, ed., *Editor to Author*, 266. (8) *Men at War*, xvii; *Esquire*, 4, 174B, 174A; *Ernest Hemingway*, 54. (9) *Death*, 191, 27. (10) *Esquire*, 2, 26; *Men at War*, xviii. (11) *Death*, 191; *Men at War*, xvii. (12) Elio Vittorini, *In Sicily*, 7-8. (13) *Men at War*, xx; *Death*, 2. (14) Samuel Putnam, *Paris Was Our Mistress*, 128; Carlos Baker, *Hemingway*, 179; unpublished letter to William Lengel, Feinberg Collection; *Time*, 50 (4 Aug. 1947), 80. (15) *Esquire*, 4, 21. (16) *The Fifth Column and the First Forty-Nine Stories*, vii; *Esquire*, 4, 174A-174B. (17) *Esquire*, 4, 174B. (18) *Death*, 192; *Ernest Hemingway*, 53. (19) *A Farewell to Arms* (1948), vii; *New York Times Book Review*, 11 Aug. 1940, 2; Josephine K. Percy, ed., *Modern Writers at Work*, 488; *Ernest Hemingway*, 54; unpublished letters to William Lengel.

The Maturing of Glenway Wescott

C. E. SCHORER

FROM a résumé of local materials in the writings of Glenway Wescott one may glean more than a catalogue of regional data having merely parochial interest. One discovers that the changing emphasis on Wisconsin bears a close correlation with the artistic development. By taking a wider view still, one sees that his work is a revelation in several of the senses outlined by him in *Fear and Trembling* (1932), where he gives the five functions of an author: to preach, teach, and govern, to reflect the age, to reflect himself, to emphasize the tendencies of the coming times, and to

pander to popular taste. In addition to himself, he reveals the course of the expatriate group of which he was a member and which included our recent Nobel prize winner, Ernest Hemingway. Because of the peculiar relationship of his life and writings to events in the social sphere, he foreshadows the future of our nation in the world.

In a few words, Wescott's work reflects his maturation insofar as he moved from the land of his birth and boyhood to a different world of his own. In his first published fiction, *The Apple of the Eye* (1924; begun, according to one ac-

count, when he was seventeen), the scenes and characters are exclusively of eastern Wisconsin, near Fond du Lac, where he was brought up. The peculiarities of this region, moreover, play essential and emphatic parts. In fact, the heart of the story resides in the liaison between the characters and the "fecund but useless" marsh—a typical feature of the kettle moraine country of Wescott's birth—as opposed to the laborious farm life and bleak society of the hamlets and towns. Furthermore, the local economics, morals, and manners become the essential conditions in which the characters move; the time corresponds mainly to that of Wescott's boyhood; and one of the chief characters, a farm youth, goes through a family conflict and separation from home which must have been similar in many ways to that which Wescott himself experienced.

This first novel suggests by its title that to break the commandments may after all be a permissible part of the good life. Fornication, prostitution, the rejection of parents' demands and of the local code of righteousness seem to receive the author's approval; certainly much disapproval is registered for the confining, spiritless, and often cruel local mores. This recurring idea shares with characterization (rather than with plot) the task of unifying a book which consists otherwise of three essentially separate parts. The characters are connected, perhaps not as completely as they might be, with a single aspect of the land, that is, the marsh, against which as a unifying standard they can be measured. The marsh, its "wide fecundity unused and unbeloved" is Han's companion, to Rosalia "it was like her life at the end," and to Dan it was first an enormous grave, and later a peaceful place which had given him all it had to give.

In Wescott's second "novel," *The Grandmothers* (1927), he widened the focus a bit to portray life outside of Wisconsin. He gave a little attention to the

ancestral background in the East; he followed a few characters to other situations in the Middle West, in the Far West, and even in Europe; and he further enlarged the perspective of his book by introducing contrasts between Europe and Wisconsin, chiefly through the viewpoint of a central character who, like Wescott, had gone abroad to live. This character serves to investigate and spiritually animate the past, even though such activity defies local morality, and to emerge with the prediction that the younger generation can be expected to "betray their West to the East . . . to betray their native land as a whole for love of some characteristically native land of their imagination"; the growth of intellectual independence takes on the forbidden tinge of sexual deviation.

Really a series of more or less separate family portraits without plot, *The Grandmothers* yields on analysis two possible schemes of organization by ending (a) with the death of the grandmothers (the chief repositories of family lore) and (b) with the ripening of an impression made on the narrator by the various characters he portrays. These are more numerous but less intense and individual than the characters in *The Apple of the Eye*, and the monotony of characterization appears to be part of a plan wherein the reader is told omnisciently how the various figures of the narrator's family—grandparents, aunts, uncles, parents, and the like—responded as they found grievances in their lives. It is this impression upon the narrator which cumulatively produces his final opinion that his heritage is a grievance, and that Wisconsin is yet a promised land because it had not kept its promise.

The Grandmothers is concerned with human striving and disappointment prevailing in "Hope's Corners"—a specifically eastern Wisconsin town. The next book, *Good-Bye Wisconsin* (1928) brings in more of the outside world by making the contrast of Wisconsin and

Europe a dominant concern. The introductory essay, in fact, is organized by the impressions made upon the expatriate as he re-enters at Milwaukee, travels to his home, surveys the way of life, and moves out again to southern France in an admittedly autobiographical manner. Kewaskum, Wescott's birthplace, is named from the Indian word for "his tracks are homeward," and the title therefore not only reflects the wider view of books like *A Farewell to Arms*, but also plays ironically on a local term. A conflict, arising as the protagonists readjust to Wisconsin after living in France, forms the crux of two of the stories, and enriches the characterization by giving a new, timely, and widely appealing issue in terms of which the characters become known to the reader.

Discontent plays a large part both as a product of local dreams, for example, the slaying by a teacher of her lover, or a bridegroom's memory of his first adulterous affair as he awaits his bride—or as a result of the comparison with other cultures, as a returned sailor recalling his infatuation with a French prostitute who became enamored of another prostitute. Here the sexual deviation is presented not as an unqualified, necessary part of joy but appears to have double values, causing sorrow and suffering even though leading to growth and wisdom. The Middle West is defined as "a state of mind of people born where they do not like to live," and the rejection of home includes the specific leavetaking from Wisconsin by the author.

Although the ten stories are independent, they have a few interrelating elements, such as the display of characters successively ranging from innocent to sophisticated, the common Wisconsin background, and the pattern of passive characters finding disappointment in Wisconsin circumstances and then coming to a decision or a new realization of themselves in the world. Thus the numerous characters actually cover a nar-

row range after accidents of occupation and situation are eliminated; or, as Wescott writes, the "strangely limited moral order. Drunkenness; old or young initiations into love; homesickness in one's father's home for one's own, wherever it may be, or the more usual sort with its attendant disappointment; the fear of God; more drunkenness." Unfortunately the stresses and strains through which the personages must live seldom seem soul-shaking: an adolescent at a birthday party is troubled by sexual inferiority, or farm misfits run away to work for a carnival. As a result the characters are not so memorable as those in Wescott's first novel.

Wescott had not yet said goodbye to Wisconsin in fiction, however, for in *The Babe's Bed*, a little book appearing in 1930, the scenes and characters are again of the state, with once more the unhappy return and leavetaking of a prodigal. This book and the three preceding books have a common train of events—the culmination of sinful deeds in the removal of a central character by death or emigration. Here the childhood love of brother and sister is awakened, and the sister offers her baby to be the brother's. The incestuous relationship, leading to conflict between man and wife and between father and son, appears to point out the truism that immorality, while part of growth, must be outgrown. Just so parental guidance, which inflicts the discontent of frustrated adults upon a "weeping, ungratified" infant for its own good must be rejected, and one's homeland must be abandoned with the realization that some frustration is inescapable. The author widens the significance of Wisconsin to a symbol of youth's everlasting problem—to grow away from its discontented ancestors into its own world.

Of equal importance with this maturing viewpoint is a new strategy of characterization that might be called the characterizing symbol, by which Wescott chiefly shows his progress as an artist.

He employs a living creature, the baby in its bed, which functions to symbolize certain human traits, to illuminate the characters by their reaction to it, and obviously to unify the story in another sphere in addition to plot. The device had been used, woodenly and occasionally, in *The Apple of the Eye*, where characters were revealed by their relation to the marsh; and in "The Whistling Swan" of *Good-Bye Wisconsin*, in an exotic and ephemeral manner, by relating the protagonist to the bird. Here the device is used as a crucial center of interest throughout the novella.

Thereafter, Wisconsin and even America appeared only incidentally and almost by way of footnote in Wescott's books. *Fear and Trembling* (1932) takes the reader on a polemical trip into militarizing Germany, with the observation that Europe is Christendom, the civilizing center of the world, and America a part of Europe—"the hope of the world, and the despair of us all." Wisconsin enters in the marginal comment that it "is as German as it ever was—and more permanently, the change having been brought about in peace." The following year, *A Calendar of Saints for Unbelievers* contained no references whatsoever to Wisconsin and merely a few passing comments on contemporary world affairs amid the trenchant biographical notes: "this Italian bishop had a vision of the end of the world, much like that of the present European and American prospect: all battles, invasions, breakage and burning." The only glimpse we get into Wescott's own life is the remark that when St. Maurelius returned to his native lands, the ruler, "his brother, regarded it as none of an expatriate's business, and put him to death."

Certain ideas which one associates with earlier, Wisconsin-bound books by Wescott appear in this pair of non-fictional works. In *A Calendar of Saints* Wescott appears to endorse immorality obliquely by casting doubt on the virtue of self-

sacrificing saints who would endure death rather than marry a profligate or who would throw purses to street walkers to spare them their shame. It is obviously a wicked book presented in disarming simplicity. In *Fear and Trembling*, the theme is the abandonment of nationalism, which should give way to common endeavor before the great threat of another war. Unlike the thematic change to relative dignity, Wescott's language becomes less effective. The imagist manner of earlier books deteriorates into cryptic exposition often lacking clarity in the smaller structural components.

With *The Pilgrim Hawk* (1940) Wescott's writing enters a new, international phase. The scene becomes a town in France, where two expatriate Americans, a Cockney, two Irish, and two French characters dramatically interact. "That was in May of 1928 or 1929, before we all returned to America [Wescott returned in 1934]. . . . In the twenties it was not unusual to meet foreigners in some country as foreign to them as to you, your peregrination just crossing theirs." The narrator is the same Alwyn Tower as in *The Grandmothers*, and we are told that he "had been a poor boy, on a Wisconsin farm, and in a slum in Chicago and in Germany in 1922." This reverses the relative importance, quantitatively and qualitatively, of Wisconsin and Europe obtaining in *The Grandmothers*.

At this stage of his career Wescott had so learned restraint that the mere suggestion of infidelity rather than its gross appearance sufficed, and such violence as occurs—the feeding of a hawk, a drunken husband's threat to kill the hawk, or himself—has the limitations of civilized married life. The assuagement of marital insecurity and jealousy by the warmth of love among English, Irish, French, and American characters, rather than the resolution of problems facing a prostitute, an unwed mother, or a boy who finds the decomposing body of his

cousin, betrayed by his best friend, shows the trend of Wescott's thinking. He seems very nearly to have reached the aim professed in *Good-Bye Wisconsin*, to write of "only the inavertible troubles, all in the spirit."

What makes *The Pilgrim Hawk* a favorite example of good modern writing is its tight and economical organization: for one day, in one house, from the single point of view of the narrator, seven characters carry forward the revelation of marital tension to crisis and resolution. This unity is enhanced by the characterizing symbol which, by its appearance in the avocations of *The Sun Also Rises*, *Across the River and into the Trees*, and *The Old Man and the Sea*, marks Wescott's affinity to Hemingway, and receives its most masterful treatment in *The Pilgrim Hawk*, where it serves in a more complex and extensive manner than elsewhere in his fiction. Here all seven individuals are symbolized in some degree by the hawk which is the focal point of the novel, and all are characterized mainly by their behavior in relation to the hawk. The characterization is almost altogether dramatic: this is closet drama in which words and gestures rather than reflection requiring an omniscient author tell us about the talents and tastes of the personages. And since these reactions are all given to the reader from the point of view of a narrator, characterization here performs the function of unification both through the symbolizing hawk and the narrator. Moreover the grouping of the figures—three couples, Irish, American, and French, plus real or suggested third parties—unifies the book in still another way while giving depth through an echo-like recurrence of a single theme among different strata of society and different national pairs.

To this formal integrity *The Pilgrim Hawk* does not add the earlier difficulty of obscure phraseology, for the reading problem which it presents is of an intellectually tantalizing, not to say satisfying

kind, and is due to the dramatic form and the characterizing symbol. One's difficulty lies in deciding how much of the hawk's apparent significance applies to the humans clustered animatedly about it. The difficulty with meaning here, that is, is not in simple grammatical matters but in the deeper and overall significance.

In *Apartment in Athens* (1945), Wescott's latest book, Wisconsin is not mentioned at all, just as the world outside Wisconsin does not appear in his first novel. The characters are all European and the scene is Greece during the last world war. Here, then, Wescott has reached the extreme in his travel from West to East. At least as regards literal fictional material, his last work totally abandons the region from which he sprang. It completes a trend of his writing with all the regularity of a linear mathematical equation. Here, too, the respect accorded family and country are quite different from that shown in earlier works. The plot is a thorough fulfillment of the promise that character may be proved under duress, that the stress of invasion may turn marital life into rich understanding and produce both a true family spirit and a proper realization of national humanist ideals. As the father of the family becomes more actively devoted to the tradition of heroic Greek individualism, the man and wife are drawn more closely together, and the children grow more steady and secure. The plot of this novel is the most conventional one Wescott has constructed. At the same time the point of view tends to shift, unfortunately, from one character to another, and the time span now is six months. Still, the unity of place and idea, and the climatic arrangement are again notable, and are achieved at greater length than in any previous book.

Although nationalism is supposed to mean something to the characters of *Apartment in Athens*, it is hard to see any importance in the nationality beyond an occasional rather haphazard reference

to Greek history and ideals, to Athenian society and architecture. It is hard, also, to see what the characterizing symbol might be in this book; the nearest one can guess is the boarder himself, for certainly the reaction to the Nazi is an important test of character. No narrator appears, however to unify the impressions, and the author puts more reliance on his explicit statement of the events in his characters' minds than on dynamic interaction. A balance of characters, at least, is preserved in the structure of the Helianos family: man and wife, son and daughter. This characterization, then, is less thorough, less craftsmanlike, and more conventional than Wescott's career would lead us to expect. It has given up the solidity and individuality of characters in his early work—virtues resulting from his establishing a connection between the characters and the Wisconsin land or the Wisconsin life-situation—without a proportionate gain of wide and stirring appeal. Likewise the language lacks any troublesome obscurity and conforms to conventional novels of this century without gaining great force thereby.

In summing up the relation between Wescott's localism and his artistic growth one notes first that his proliferation in prose concerning Wisconsin certainly exceeded in a merely quantitative way the productions in which Wisconsin played no part. In the six years from 1924 to 1930, four books about his home state appeared. In the quarter-century since, four books (two non-fictional) also have appeared. One need not be so simple-minded as to assume that the geographical focus was the sole cause of productivity. Other factors—waning talents, changed health, difficulties of publication—may well have played their parts. One can simply conclude that Wescott's fictional pen was most prolific while he was dealing with Wisconsin.

The recurrence of certain ideas, modified in succeeding publications, shows

them to be the counterpart of the local detail in his fiction. A dominant idea is sexual deviation and its associated theme of a child in tense relation to its home. At first Wescott dealt with the more gross aberrations and violent attitudes; later he turned to civilized and traditional problem-solving. And whereas Wescott's ideas seem to have lost shocking power as he grew older, his books have generally showed increasingly adept organization. The first three books are rather collections than novels (and so are the two non-fictional works, the structure of which can not be easily correlated with the structure of the novels and stories); on the other hand, the last two books are related masterfully to a single plot.

Wescott's characterization has varied with the novelty of his ideas, the localization of his scenes, and the economy of overall organization. In a way this is to say that the characters are appropriate; yet fitness is only one standard by which to judge an author's skill. Most readers will prefer such bold and original figures as Han and Mike, with their local connections, to the Greek merchant Helianos, with his dimly realized family and city relations.

The obscurity of Wescott's early and middle-phase books, and especially *Fear and Trembling*, becomes at worst annoying; in *The Pilgrim Hawk* it stimulates the mind. The style of *Apartment in Athens* neither annoys nor stimulates. It is as adequate as tea. In short his use of language has progressed from relative obscurity, imagistic and impressionistic, to a relative clarity, dramatic and dialectic. This strikes one as a fulfillment of his early prediction that "for another book I should like to learn to write in a style . . . without slang, with precise equivalents instead of idioms, a style of rapid grace for the eye rather than sonority for the ear, in accordance with the ebb and flow of sensation rather than with intellectual habits, and out of which myself, with my origins and my preju-

dices and my Wisconsin, will seem to have disappeared."

Skepticism, at least of one kind, Wescott may have learned by living through a cycle of critical reception. He has experienced the beginning of recognition, the climb to a position of promising to become the "top American novelist," the award of the Harper Prize, with which he attained the summit of his reputation, having produced in *The Grandmothers* what Clifton Fadiman called "the first artistically satisfying rendition of the soul of an American pioneering community and its descendants"; the decline, thereafter, into the non-fictional works of the thirties, generally condemned for superficiality; and the grudgingly granted esteem of an entirely different kind with his two recent novels to gain, by the last volume, the acclaim of "the finest book whose roots were in the second world war."

This pattern of achievement, decline, and recovery of critical favor can be related easily but too facilely to the use of Wisconsin in Wescott's writing; clearly he was most highly esteemed when he wrote of Wisconsin. With this simplified view, however, must be combined (for the sake of a more complicated and yet more sound orientation) the awareness that concomitantly with Wescott's changing productions occurred shifts of national and world affairs and altered emphases in American literary taste. One need only suggest points of harmony and dissonance between his progress and the world of affairs: the pre-depression years, isolationism, Roosevelt, Freud, Henry James, the second world war. To say that in the end he adapted himself to the times is another way of saying that he reveals the times.

The development of Glenway Wescott clearly produced mixed merits: a gain of technical virtuosity, a loss of reality. In some ways like other American expatriates—and one thinks, often, of James, Garland, Hemingway—his late work

shows improved economy and centralization, drama and clarity, with a loss of local connections, memorable ideas, and vigorous characters. His last phase showed the clarification and cumulative enrichment of his artistry. Of the three expatriates just mentioned, however, he most resembles Garland, for his early work remains the most noteworthy and the best remembered. Like Garland in 1914, too, his Wisconsin having given him all it could, he moved on with less success of realization to treat of other regions.

This pattern reminds one distinctly of the dilemma facing the expatriates in the 1930's, as portrayed by Malcolm Cowley:

they could go . . . back to Wisconsin, but only to say goodbye. They had been uprooted from something more than a birthplace, a county or a town. Their real exile was from society itself, from any society with purposes they could share, toward which they could honestly contribute and from which they could draw new strength.

It reminds one, too, of the new role America is playing: having outlived the days of self-reflective provincialism, with whatever minor notes of self-criticism, it now finds itself having to consider how to apply local American methods and viewpoints to the situation of a major industry in Europe or a farmer in Asia. With the abandonment of isolated bucolic American life for international guidance, haphazard individualism gives way to more systematically planned enterprise directed toward socially constructive goals. The change may involve some loss of the glamorous American freedom and prosperity. It may well be reflected in a literature of similarly modified characteristics. Wescott's literary career, a very model of such changes, has consciously or unconsciously wrought out this moral for a student of our life. If he in 1934 seemed a prototype of Cowley's socially alienated exile, he now stands as a suggestive indicator of our future.

Round Table

A NOTE FOR ERNEST HEMINGWAY

VERN WAGNER

We are humbled by an old man. To have him though is to have you not.

For thirty years we have worried your code to ritual to violence and to death. But we have only climbed hills like white elephants to catch cats in the rain. We have suffered Jake's loss only to wear a puzzling wound that left no hole.

Now, Mr. Hemingway, when are you going to write truly? No more wars, please, politics, sociology, nor ichthyology. Where is Nick? Has his bell tolled?

Do not come back to Michigan but move on to Missouri—not Mississippi where all bad Americans go when they die. How about Dreiser now? You are past James. Forgive many marriages as he forgave torrents against him.

You found Moby Dick and learned Walden at last. Now join the spirit in St. Louis—a city, surely, of memories. Tell us what about Missouri. I am no apotheosis, no Santiago, nor was meant to be. An attendant reader, eager to swell your progress, a willing tool, at times your fool. But not Manolin.

Fishery and Anglicanism: these the only rituals? Why not Picasso now after Manet? Besides, the wench is dead. Only cookery manuals flavor her air.

Papa mio. What is America truly truly? A renegade doctor treating a Chinese mother, an incestuous mother, a miscegenated marlin? So think Swedes.

We wait west of the river, beneath the cottonwoods, in the far country, for the sun to rise. Give us no Winter Words nor November Boughs. Let your Mississippi float forth a yet tidier raft. I kid you not. Be primary—no blood, no sky, but Missouri yellow.

You have converted Moby Dick without Shakespeare and beyond Calvin. You have expanded Walden into an open sea. You have caught Ishmael in a hospital bed, a sleeping bag, a gondola. You have pitted

Quixote with bulls and lions and fish and marriage-bent women. Can you now incarnate Natty Bumppo with Clyde Griffiths? Let the air in, Copito? Do not say Nada. Winesburg without sediment. Gatsby without gold. World without end. Missouri.

Come on, Mr. Hemingway. Break your armistice. There is no separate peace. I caress the small of your back. We can have such a damned good time together. Shoot no more ministers at dawn. Delay death past the afternoon. Put on a raincoat. Draw interesting, not interested eyes. Sing no mournful four quartets, attend no cocktail parties. Squeeze no universe into a ball, but press liquor from a Missouri apple.

Tell us, Mr. Hemingway, what now makes an American. No more Mrs. Eliot's Mr. Eliots. No more nuns with a radio in Billings, Montana—I knew that nun. She was a papa-ist. Papa mio, where is Nick? In what Missouri place? In what immortality? Let him trail a fifty-seven-year-old and wrinkling hand in the continental drainage canal, assuring us he can never die.

I dip this pen in vitamins for you. Be not Henry Adams. Skip no several decades. What happened in the twenty years between that Spanish bridge and the happy Cuban fishing ground? Only a Venetian canal? Must we admit your noble prize was only for American adolescence senilitized? Be not Babbitt. Be Cowperwood, Snopes, be Truman.

I send you my message. Proteus, the old man of the sea, was a sea god who when seized would assume any shape he chose. I seize you, Ernest Hemingway. Shape then for us a Missourian fifty-seven years old. Leave us to dream not of leopards high on an African hill, nor of lions on an African beach, but of bison on a Missouri prairie.

Come on, Mr. Hemingway. No one yet reads the American book. We are everywhere waiting for you.

Councilletter

NCTE COLLEGE SECTION—1957 NOMINATIONS

In May, Council members of the College Section will receive mail ballots for electing two members of the Section Committee and two Directors of the Council to represent the Section. In accordance with the requirement of the NCTE Constitution, the names of the persons chosen by the Nominating Committee are printed below. Additional nominees may be named by a petition signed by fifteen members of the Council. Nine advisers for *College English* will also be chosen in May.

This year's Nominating Committee consisted of Brice Harris, Penn State; Porter G. Perrin, University of Washington; and Erwin R. Steinberg, Carnegie Tech, Chairman.

COLLEGE SECTION COMMITTEE (two to be elected)

Horst Frenz (Indiana University)
Charlton G. Laird (University of Nevada)
Donald R. Tuttle (Penn College)
Francis Shoemaker (Teachers College, Columbia)

DIRECTORS REPRESENTING THE COLLEGE SECTION (two to be elected)

Hermann C. Bowersox (Roosevelt College)
Wallace W. Douglas (Northwestern University)
Albert R. Kitzhaber (Kansas University)
Stewart S. Morgan (Texas Agricultural and Mechanical College)

FROM THE FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT

BRICE HARRIS

What the American public talks about is a subject of constant amusement and concern. We are born critics, quarterbacks, and straw bosses, inclined to believe for the moment at least that our individual opinions provide the solutions for all ills. And so at morning, afternoon, and evening social gatherings, our men and women explode on every conceivable issue. We talk freely of sports, politics, local and national gossip, science, money, automobiles, women, and perhaps less often of books, music, art, philosophy, and religion. Poorly informed on occasion, rife with prejudice, we proceed nevertheless to set matters straight according to our lights.

But I venture to suggest that if a digest could be made of all these discussions, the education of our children would stand high on the list of subjects. Few social gatherings are able, or for that matter try, to avoid it for long. It is indeed everybody's business, and he knows it. Nor do I doubt for a moment that English teaching would come up handily with first honors in this

category. Everybody "took" English at some time and consequently is abundantly able to offer advice.

Well, let us say it is a typical evening—the guests are comfortably seated, smoking assiduously and ready for an argument. The latest uneventful sports event has been dealt with and local gossip is paling scandalously when some one innocently remarks that her little Amy (aren't you tired of Mary and Johnny?), now in 2-B, can't spell *cat*. Thesis stated, the debate begins. A moderately unsuccessful male, fiftyish and nostalgic, harks back to the days of the blue-back speller and praises the pedagogic virtues of a revered schoolmarm. A bright-eyed young mother only ten years away from classic halls and current methods takes up the cudgels and avers that her little Willie in 2-A can spell dozens of words, including *irascible*. Everybody takes sides, and the breach widens until suddenly some one discovers that he has an eight-o'clock conference the next morning and must leave at once.

Elsewhere a somewhat older group is discussing the virtues and faults of the local high-school reading list. In spelling-bee fashion they choose sides. One side asserts that *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Idylls of the King*, *Silas Marner*, *The House of Seven Gables*, and Poe's short stories must form the base of any really solid curriculum for high-school sophomores. The other insists that *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The New York Times*, and a wise selection of readings which reflect the current sociological, political, and economic scene should reinforce the old stand-bys. One contestant states that his literary life stemmed from his first acquaintance with *Silas*; his opponent is convinced that hers began with *Little Amy and the Glug-Glug Fairy*. This or a similar impasse usually occurs about quitting time.

College students too have parents who are frequently disturbed publicly by the freshman English courses their offspring are taking. The literature of course is "just about what they had in high school," but the composition courses are unendurable. Oh for the good old days of Latin syntax, Canby and Opdycke, and Wooley's *Handbook*!

Meanwhile, the discussions continue: The White House Conference was the most important step in education during this decade; the Conference was undemocratic, rigged, and futile. Professor Arthur Bestor is the voice of one crying in the wilderness; Professor Bestor is living in an impossible past, his reasoning and his figures are incorrect, and he repeats himself flagrantly. Segregation, Federal aid, the superior child, the teaching load, the teacher shortage, group dynamics, improved certification—make your own list from these random suggestions—will be discussed in forceful and usually friendly fashion at parents' meetings and social gatherings everywhere.

And what shall we teachers of English do? Encourage discussion, of course, and hope that more of it will be translated into action. What could be worse than being ignored? What more complimentary than having our problems on everybody's tongue? We don't agree among ourselves on everything, we aren't subject to "line" orders, but if we are wise and tolerant and informed, every one of us has an unique opportunity for local and national service of the first order.

SUMMER WORKSHOPS, 1957

During the summer of 1957 the National Council of Teachers of English will co-sponsor workshops at the following colleges, and possibly at one or two others. More details will be given next month.

Alabama College. Three-week workshop with emphasis on grammar and oral and written composition. For details write Prof. M. L. Orr, Sr., Alabama College, Montevallo, Ala.

Stanford University. Pacific Coast English Conference. Write Prof. Alfred Grommon, Stanford University, Stanford, Calif.

Purdue University. Three-week workshop emphasizing linguistics and composition teaching. Write Prof. Russell Cosper, Pur-

due University, Lafayette, Ind.

Iowa State Teachers College. Two-week workshop, focused on literature for adolescents. Write Prof. John Cowley, Iowa State Teachers College, Cedar Falls, Iowa.

North Texas State College. Six-week workshop, either half of which may be taken, the first devoted to composition, the second to literature. Write Prof. Ernest S. Clifton, North Texas State College, Denton, Texas.

Marshall College, Huntington, West Virginia. Three-week workshop stressing junior and senior high-school reading. Write Hardy R. Finch, 236 Milbank Avenue, Greenwich, Conn.

News and Ideas

THE RUSSIANS ARE READING American literature again, according to Deming Brown (*The Reporter*, 29 November 1956). The work they talk about most is *The Old Man and the Sea*, perhaps because it is the first work of Hemingway's to be translated into Russian in seventeen years. Presumably he has been forgiven for writing *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, which the Russians considered slanderous. Next year several of Hemingway's individual novels and an omnibus volume containing both novels and short stories will appear. O. Henry, Dreiser, and Twain maintain the popularity they have always had, and Howard Fast apparently has a larger following there than here. Faulkner, on the other hand, has remained almost unknown; only a couple of short stories have been translated, and when he is mentioned by critics, it has been as a decadent reactionary. But there are signs that his works are becoming acceptable, and a translation of some of his short stories is now in preparation.

MILTON'S SONNET "WHEN I CONSIDER How My Light Is Spent" seems to have been about his blindness after all, according to Maurice Kelley (Princeton) in the August *Modern Philology*. Kelley examines the famous Cambridge Manuscript, which contains (or at one time contained) transcripts of many of Milton's poems, as a means of dating some of the poet's later sonnets. Contrary to the theory of Lysander Kemp (*Hopkins Review*, 1952), who reasons that the sonnet must date from about 1642, and therefore can not concern Milton's blindness, Kelley finds evidence in the manuscript for a date in mid- or late 1655—some time after Milton went blind. The evidence of the manuscript likewise pushes the date of Milton's sonnet on his deceased wife up to about 1658 or 1660, a fact which is important in deciding which of his deceased wives Milton was talking about; Kelley argues that Milton's subject was Katherine Woodcock (the traditional view) and not Mary Powell (as W. R. Parker has maintained).

DAVID DAICHES (OXFORD) HAS A delightful poem in the 29 December *New Yorker*, attacking a theory of the universe advanced in 1684 by Thomas Burnet (Cambridge). Burnet objected to the lack of symmetry in nature; Daiches feels things are better as they are.

ANDREW WORDSWORTH, THE great-great nephew of William Wordsworth, gossips about his family in the 13 September *Listener*. Andrew is descended from William's youngest brother, Christopher, who was master of Trinity Cambridge. Andrew's grandfather, also Christopher, was Bishop of Lincoln and a hymn-writer; his Aunt Elizabeth, who seems to have known most of the *Aeneid* by heart, was the first principal of Lady Margaret Hall. How does it feel to be a Wordsworth? "In three words," Andrew says, "it has been Rather Too Much."

THE COMING FLOOD OF STUDENTS is almost the only subject of educators' talks these days. Clarence Faust, president of the Fund for the Advancement of Education and vice president of the Ford Foundation, spoke on the subject at a meeting of the Association of American Colleges in Philadelphia, according to Benjamin Fine in the 13 January *New York Times*. Faust suggested that the flood may have the happy effect of prodding many institutions into correcting faults of long standing. He proposed less spoon-feeding of students and more opportunity for independence and responsibility. Specifically, he suggested that the first three or four weeks of a fifteen-week course might be spent in lectures or discussions outlining the problems and the possible methods of solution. Students would then work independently for six or eight weeks, convening at the end of the semester for three or four weeks of class discussion. If this seems to demand too much initiative or responsibility from the students, Faust argued, then the need for insisting on independent work from the students is even greater than it seems.

EARL J. McGRATH, FORMER U. S. Commissioner of Education and now director of the Institute of Higher Education at Teachers College Columbia, at the same meeting suggested cutting the high-school program by two years for students in the upper third of the class. By squeezing out the waste and increasing the concentration of the work, the student might learn more and save time, to say nothing of the saving in time, teachers, and money for the high-school system.

"WAIT TILL THE BULGE COMES." IS this your dreamy answer to your current problems of prestige and salary? Before you let it get too firmly set, better listen to the sour note sounded in the Winter *AAUP Bulletin* by Arthur A. Ekirch, Jr. (American), who warns us that colleges may have to adjust their standards down to those of high schools, that there may have to be a post-doctoral degree created, and that there may be "a disproportionate increase in administrative personnel in colleges."

THE KINSHIP BETWEEN DICKENS and Shaw, explored by Edgar Johnson (CCNY) in the Winter *Virginia Quarterly Review*, is an expected one, but that between Hawthorne and Faulkner, expanded by William Van O'Connor (Minnesota) in the same issue, is less predictable, especially as the living writer has expressed his feeling that Hawthorne was too European. O'Connor's article should be compared with one on the same subject by Randall Stewart (Vanderbilt) in the February 1956 *CE*.

ADMIRERS OF THE MINOR WORKS of Henry James will be pleased to find "A Tragedy of Errors" reprinted in the September *New England Quarterly*. Leon Edel (NYU) offers proof that this story (published February 1864) rather than "The Story of a Year" (March 1865) is James's first. A melodramatic piece with an O. Henryish ending, it has little literary merit, but for scholars it is now more accessible than it was in the files of the long-dead *Continental Magazine*.

THE FORTIETH ANNUAL CONVENTION of the American Federation of Teachers (AFL-CIO) resolved last August

"that while we champion the use of television as an audio-visual aid to the individual teacher in a classroom, we are unalterably opposed to mass education by television as a substitute for professional classroom techniques."

ALAN JAY LERNER EXPLAINS SOME of the problems of adapting *Pygmalion* as a musical, in the November *Shaw Bulletin*. One major change, he points out, was to bring onstage some of implied action of the play, such as Doolittle's home life and Eliza's progress in her lessons. Mr. Lerner believes that the musical has not done violence to Shaw and that it has, indeed, underscored Shaw "in terms of character, costume, customs, scenery, and music."

STEPHEN CRANE WAS ALWAYS angry when critics pointed out resemblances between *The Red Badge of Courage* and Zola's *La Débâcle*, and there is some evidence that he had never read Zola's book. Yet there are enough parallels between the two to suggest some connection. John B. Colvert (Texas), writing in the February 1956 *Modern Language Notes*, finds this connection in a review of *La Débâcle* in the *N. Y. Tribune* for 10 July 1892, an issue which also contained Crane's own story "The Broken-Down Van." Presumably, Crane read the review with its summary of the opening scene as well as statement of Zola's intentions in the novel. This discovery strengthens the possibility that Crane could have known about Zola's book without having read it, but it does not preclude the possibility of his having read it later. The point remains moot.

MARK TWAIN SUCCESSFULLY fused the romantic conventional view of the Mississippi with the pilot's awareness of the treachery behind the beauty only in *Huckleberry Finn*. He did this in part through "the inspired idea of having the western boy tell his own story in his own idiom." Leo Marx (Minnesota) examines the historical evidence to determine why this happened. In "The Pilot and the Passenger," *American Literature* (May), he finds significant reasons in Mark Twain's trip to the Mississippi in search of material for the second volume of *Life on the Mis-*

Mississippi. On this trip he became increasingly aware of the encroachment of progress on the river, and this new awareness apparently was the catalyst for his new style when he returned to work on *Huckleberry Finn* in 1883 after the manuscript had lain neglected for seven years. Huck is neither the innocent traveler nor the initiated pilot; nor does it occur to him to choose between beauty and utility. By maintaining a fidelity to the experience of his narrator, Twain wrote a book "rare in our literature, which manages to suggest the lovely possibilities of life in America without negating its terrors." Parallel descriptions of the sunrise from *Tom Sawyer*, *Life on the Mississippi*, and *Huckleberry Finn* appear at the end of the article and offer concrete evidence in support of Marx's ideas.

MELVILLE'S USE OF CETOLOGICAL information in *Moby-Dick* is defended in the same issue by J. A. Ward (Tulane). Ward believes that Melville wanted to "examine the whale in such a way as to relate the whale and whaling to virtually every field of human endeavor." This is as good a reason for the cetological chapters as any yet advanced, but it still does not explain away the feeling of most readers that the pace is slowed down intolerably in many places.

THE HUDSON REVIEW'S SERIES OF revaluations of eighteenth-century English writers, begun in the Spring issue with John Holloway's (Queen's Cambridge) discussion of Swift, continues in the Autumn number with a survey of "The Laughter of Laurence Sterne" by Norman N. Holland (MIT). Thus far the series has maintained a high standard of critical excellence and should prove useful to most teachers of beginning courses in English literature.

TEACHERS' COLLEGES CAN SELECT and hold superior students is the conclusion of Ben D. Wood (Columbia) and Robert D. North (Educational Records Bureau) in the November 1956 *Journal of Higher Education*. Fifteen years ago Wood found that sixteen teachers colleges in the East were using highly selective admissions procedures in an effort to get good students into the field. The follow-up showed that these

institutions have been successful in continuing the process and maintaining high standards.

THE UNIVERSITY AS A CORPORATION and the resultant dangers are the concern of James C. Carey (Kansas State) in the November *JHE*. "The emphasis is then placed on getting more students, to get more state funds to get more buildings to get more students to get more funds. Why the circle? Because this has become corporation business with its sales and customers...."

SARCASM, SCOLDING, SELF-APPROVAL are the most objectionable vices of teachers, according to a survey of students at Worcester Polytechnic, reported in the November *JHE*. Most teachers know how upsetting the use of sarcasm can be, but "Often the use of sarcasm is unconscious, that is, the instructor does not realize the students regard his comments as sarcastic. The instructor must be on guard...."

IF YOU THINK THAT *SILAS MARNER* is an item from your past exclusively, you should read Robert Heilman (Washington), sometimes identified as a New Critic, on the novel for an audience that still reads it—high-school teachers of English. "Return to Raveloe: Thirty-Five Years After" is in the January *English Journal*, *CE*'s counterpart.

ANY SMART TEACHER OF COMPOSITION ought to be able to win a set of the *Britannica* by watching Bergen Evans (Northwestern) in his new series, "The Last Word" (CBS-TV, Sun. 2:30), and then dreaming up a question about English usage that will present a legitimate problem but not upset a guest panel of non-specialists. On the first program, Evans and three "commercial" writers had at "It is *me*," "Winstons taste good, like a cigarette should," and Elvis's "Love Me Tender."

TO KEEP YOUR STUDENTS OF POETRY shaking, rattling, and rolling, you may want to use Jack E. Leonard's record (Vik) of "Daffodil Rock," which, according to John S. Wilson in *The New York Times* for 13 January, uses Wordsworth's "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" as lyrics.

New Books

Poetry

THE FORM OF LOSS, Edgar Bowers (Alan Swallow, 48 pp., \$2). UNEXPECTED TRUCE, Don Geiger (Round Table Books, 64 pp., \$2.50). THE PER-SIMMON TREE, Peter Viereck (Scribner's, 80 pp., \$3.00). POETS OF TODAY III (Charles Scribner's Sons, 197 pp., \$3.95); all 1956. Edgar Bowers (Harpur), writes what his admirer, Yvor Winters, calls expository poetry—logical discourse seldom supported by narrative or metaphoric frames. His feelings in this first volume seem cold and detached, but are, nonetheless, compassionate; the idea of a snowman melting describes them. Bowers speaks with the insight and repose that comes after terrible vision; in a world where everything dies, form endures—the music of Mozart, a sea-shell, his own poetry. Naturally, with this pre-occupation his mastery of traditional verse-forms tends to be complete. The losses he sustains—the last war, the death of friends, the idea of his own death—frequently turn him toward another familiar form, the suffering Christ. But his religious desire is never consummated in his poetry; it remains narcissistic in formal detachment this side of the mirror.

Mr. Geiger (California) presents a scramble of packed-up language in his first volume ("and sun the wet red wad of her heart like a rose"). His vision of the commonplaces of war, love, and family life is commonplace and, at times, vulgar. He has much verbal force but little imaginative energy.

No one poem in Viereck's fourth volume is a work of art, but the collection is. Viereck (Mount Holyoke) binds together his pastoral and lyrical poems with a vision of spring come back after years of winter. His title poem concludes: "Brief bloom, we always wrong you; earth is/A drabber patch than need have been." The *enfant terrible*, rasping at the edges of his earlier poetry, is quiet in this volume; here Viereck's sentiments, freely and lightly discharged, are thoroughly mature.

Poets of Today III, the third volume in

a series to be introduced by John Hall Wheelock, contains the first volumes of three poets, Lee Anderson, Spencer Brown, and Joseph Langland. (1) Lee Anderson (unemployed but erudite enough to be in anyone's academy) calls his volume *The Floating World and Other Poems*. His title poem, the most interesting of all, is a long philosophical work, employing a variety of rhythms suited to the systematic recurrence and development of its many themes. While contemplating, in symphonic variation, suicide, alcohol, mysticism, and other diversions, the poet focuses on sexual passion as an equilibrating response to imminent oblivion. (2) In *My Father's Business and Other Poems*, Spencer Brown (Fieldston School, N.Y.C.) describes persons, places, and things in context of the frightening universe revealed by contemporary physics and astronomy. Dignified in his natural speech, he pleads human dignity, but expects the worst. He speaks slowly and quietly most of the time, but has at his command an extended syntax which he sends into rhetorical sweep when the imponderables disturb him. He writes best without rhyme, which seems to hurry his natural flow and to retard his climactic moments. (3) Joseph Langland's *The Green Town* is a brilliant collection of lyric poems written in unusual stanzaic forms. Anyone unconvinced of the correlation between music and poetry should read it. Much of his sound, especially his rhyme, is comparable to Yeats's achievement in "Byzantium." Langland (a Middle-Westerner now at Wyoming) is understandably drawn to birds, flowers, little animals, and snakes. He is fascinated by the non-human and stimulated thereby to poetic speech, but, like Henry Vaughan, he usually incorporates nature as background, metaphor, and symbol for the convolutions of the human spirit. Langland is the best of the younger poets who have returned to the older verse forms; his poetic rituals make sound and sense.

MAC HAMMOND

UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

Bibliography and Reference

GOOD READING, ed. J. Sherwood Weber (New American Library, rev. 11th pr., 1956, 285 pp., 50¢, paper). This is a book that many college teachers wrapped up in single periods or writers might deprecate as popular or superficial. Actually, it is one of the most helpful handbooks available to college students and teachers, especially in this seventeenth revision. A product of the Committee on College Reading since 1932, sponsored by CEA and endorsed by NCTE, AEA, ALA, and ACRL, it lists some 1500 titles under 36 individual headings (historical periods, literary types, and special sections like *Quarterly Magazines*, *Poetry and Drama on Records*, *Checklist of Paper-bound Editions*). Written by forty college teachers and scholars, and edited by Prof. Weber (Pratt), it is the very thing to suggest to a student who needs a reading list with comments on content and availability—or to a self whose knowledge of certain fields turns out to be limited or out-dated.

EIGHT AMERICAN AUTHORS: A REVIEW OF RESEARCH AND CRITICISM, ed. Floyd Stovall (MLA, 1956, 418 pp., \$4). "...Not a detailed bibliography, but a series of bibliographical essays" is the description by Editor Stovall (Virginia) of this major contribution to American research. The subjects and writers are: Poe, Jay Hubbell (Duke); Emerson, Stovall; Hawthorne, Walter Blair (Chicago); Thoreau, Lewis Leary (Columbia); Melville, Stanley Williams (Yale); Whitman, Willard Thorp (Princeton); Twain, Harry Clark (Wisconsin); James, Robert Spiller (Pennsylvania). The results are: a dependable (spot-checks done on the Hawthorne and Melville chapters) survey of the significant scholarship on these significant nineteenth-century creators, a manual for graduate and undergraduate teachers of these subjects, and an introduction for graduate and advanced undergraduate students. Altogether an indispensable volume.

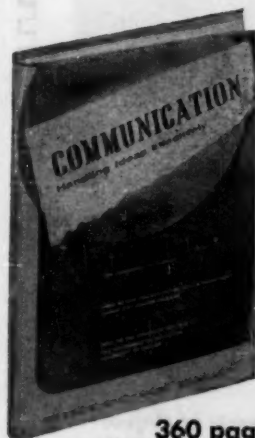
Anthologies

THE VIKING BOOK OF FOLK BALLADS OF THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING WORLD, ed. Albert B. Friedman (Viking, 1956, 473 pp., \$4.95, paper \$3.75). By a Harvard folklorist, this work is terse but comprehensive, including many ancient and modern ballad versions. The introduction discusses all important aspects of ballad transmission; the headnotes are competent. On debatable points, the editor frankly states his opinion. The history (when known) of each piece is sketched, and the sources are given for text(s) and tune(s) presented; otherwise, no references. The classified grouping of the pieces may displease some, but it makes possible informative group headnotes. Happily absent is the tone of reverential awe found in

some ballad editors; evident is healthy respect for folk art and artists. Especially intelligent are notices of ancient folklore in texts and recognition of the overwhelming of later folk verse by broadside literature. In one respect ballad editors are all alike: after carefully defining folk ballads, they include pieces that cannot possibly pass as ballads: so here, pp. 83, 104, 140, 207, 219, 229, 265, 286. This space could better have been devoted, e.g., to modern examples of the "returned lover" motif. With its index, bibliography, discography, and a selection of tunes, this book is usable in undergraduate ballad courses.

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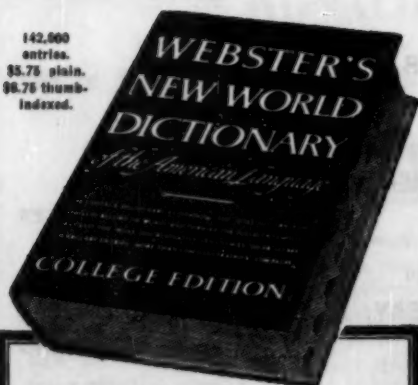
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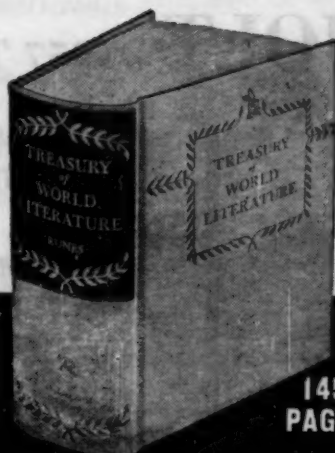
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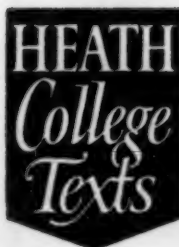
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